

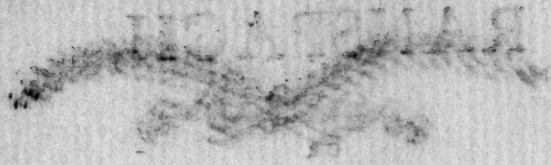
RANSPACH,
OR
MYSTERIES OF A CASTLE;
A NOVEL,
IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
EDWARD DE COURCY, &c.

VOL. II.

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in consequence of the fact that the
same, although the same, was not
amount of time is dependent on the
will of one of the two parties.
and the success is usually on the side
of the party who has the most
resources and the more powerful
army.

1848



RANSPACH,
OR
MYSTERIES OF A CASTLE.

CHAP. XIV.

WHILE the glow of new-born joy, in consequence of Theodore's good fortune, enlivened the tender susceptible bosom of Olivia, it happened to be the birth-night of one of the royal family; and the baroness insisting on lady Edith's accompanying her to court, Olivia was necessitated to pass the evening alone, as

the baron was engaged on affairs of importance in his closet. Solitude on this occasion was not regarded with terror, since lord Edmund, whose presence she would most have dreaded, was with his mother and sister, a sharer in the court gala. She sat down, with intention of feasting her ideas with a perusal of Theodore's letter, but on searching her pocket, she found it not there. Somewhat alarmed, she immediately went to her own room, to examine her trunks, which, however, proved equally unsuccessful; but she had not long indulged the vexation such an event would excite, before a billet was brought her, in lady Edith's hand-writing, importing that an accident had obliged her to withdraw from court, to the house of an acquaintance hard by, where she wished to see Olivia without delay: it was added—"say nothing to
 my

my father, but immediately follow the bearer."——A stranger to duplicity and the arts of mankind, she directed the person to wait while she put on her hood and cloak, with as much haste as the occasion seemed to require, and without uttering a word to any one, went out with the messenger, whom she did not recollect to have seen before. He led her in great haste through several streets, with which she was utterly unacquainted, and by many dark alleys and intricate windings, till she perceived at length, that they approached the river. Now, for the first time, her heart misgave her——she made an effort to return, but was presently seized by a huge ill-looking man, who seemed to have waited for her arrival, and who immediately bound a handkerchief over her mouth, which prevented her shrieks from being heard.

In this manner he forced her to the water-side, where lay a boat ready to receive her, the crew of which seemed well acquainted with the business in hand. The man held her confined within his arms, till they came alongside a vessel, when she was put aboard, and closely shut up within the cabin, without any attendant or spectator of her misery. The ship almost immediately weighed anchor, and she continued left to her excruciating feelings till the morning, when the same ill-looking man entered the cabin. Addressing herself to him, in the bitterness of her soul, she endeavoured to move his compassion, and to prevail with him to convey her back to the shore. Had she examined attentively the features of his face, she would have presaged her request to be as unsuccessful as it proved; for never before had

had nature stamped a human countenance with such strong characters of savage ferocity and barbarism.

Pedro (so was he called) was by the father's side descended from Tartar original—had been purchased in Hungary by Welsted, and though early in life brought to England, still retained many characteristic traits of his fierce uncivilized ancestry. His figure was of gigantic size, and in his dark visage lowered a soul fitted to deeds of horror: beneath the black cloak he wore, hung a poignard partly concealed. Olivia, as she knelt before him, beheld the instrument of death, and regarding herself in the hands of a wretch whose appetite was blood—whose trade was slaughter—she fell senseless at his feet. On recovering, she found herself on the deck, from

which she perceived the lofty spires of London, far receding from the view. All hopes of regaining the British shore were at an end: the sailors, whose curiosity Pedro had effectually amused, beheld her distress with indifference—not a countenance was there among them, which seemed to express the remotest pity of her sufferings. She desired to be conveyed back again to the cabin, where, amidst a multitude of distracting ideas, a faint gleam of hope shot up sufficient to preserve her intellects from entire derangement. Should the vessel make the continent, which appeared a probable conclusion, an escape might not be impracticable, and she might perhaps be enabled to take refuge in the chateau de Blore. Imperfect as was the flattering prospect, it tended in some measure to support her under an afflict-

affliction, which, but for this feeble dawn of hope, must have proved too severe for her tender frame to sustain :—with more composure than before, she saw Pedro enter the cabin, who said, in a harsh voice—“ You do well to behave more patiently—I can tell you, that nothing will be gotten by tossing and flouncing.”

“ May I not enquire to what port you are steering ?”

“ Woman’s curiosity (replied the savage, with a coarse jeer)—what matters the port—you will probably know, when we get there.”

Olivia sighed bitterly, and said no more. After some days of swift sailing, they approached a cluster of tremendous rocks, where the sailors cast anchor. Pedro entering the cabin, told her she

was

was arrived at the place of destination, and desired her to come upon deck : observing that she trembled so excessively, as to be incapable of walking, he took her in his arms, and carried her to the deck, from whence she saw with horror, the gothic towers of a castle, rising among the rocks. Her heart sunk within her, with a dreadful presage, that she now beheld the turrets of her future prison. A boat being hoisted, she was taken from the ship by the same muscular force that had forced her into it ; for some time they coasted beneath the most tremendous precipices imagination could conceive, and at length made a small creek, which discovered a frightful old castle, built on a peninsula, that jutted some ways into the sea : the rock on which it stood was of stupendous elevation, and its battlements, viewed from the boat,

boat, appeared lost in sky : a few miserable islanders, scarce visible to the naked eye, appeared suspended over the awful deep, in the hazardous employment of taking the eggs of innumerable sea-fowl, which now filled the air with shrill and melancholy notes. In fine, the place designed for Olivia's captivity, was the most northerly of the Orkney isles. The boat having made a convenient landing, Pedro proceeded with Olivia to the portal of the castle—the iron gate he unlocked with a ponderous key, that hung at his girdle—every thing within indicated the most dreary solitude—the spacious court was overgrown with weeds and brambles, though the building itself did not appear in a dilapidated state :—indeed, its surprizing strength seemed impregnable to the force of time itself. Pedro blew a bugle
1800.
horn,

horn, the sound of which was returned by reverberation from the solitary towers and ivied battlements around: the door was presently opened by an old woman, whose meagre figure expressed decrepitude and famine; it closed on their entrance, with a heavy hollow sound, that awfully thrilled through every trembling nerve of Olivia's frame—the castle clock beat eight—it sounded in her ear as a knell, summoning her to a dreadful fate—"yet surely (cried she) the silent tomb becomes a welcome refuge to a wretch like me!"

Mean time, the old woman continued to gaze on her with hollow sunken eyes, stretched in astonishment. Pedro prevented her speech, by saying, he had brought her a guest—"A little unexpectedly (added he) but she must excuse this."

"Ah!

"Ah! well-a-day (exclaimed the old woman) I know not how so fine a lady can be accommodated here."

"Peace, you old fool, and set about providing something to eat."

"What should I get you to eat? (resumed she)—I have nothing but an oat-cake and two trouts, and should not have had these, but for neighbour Donald."

"Begone, and cook them," in a surly tone.

They were now within a large gothic hall, the narrow windows of which seemed reluctantly to admit the twilight of the evening, now so dusky, as to prevent the few articles of furniture which the place contained, from being distinctly seen. All was dead and chilling silence—no sound of footsteps or voices

were

were heard, except those of Pedro and the woman, who, in fact, were the only inhabitants of this vast dreary mansion. Gillian having kindled a fire on the hearth, prepared the two fish, of which Olivia refused to partake, and desired to be conducted to her chamber. Pedro ordered her to be shown to the oak chamber in the east tower.

“The east tower! (repeated the old woman, with a look of terror)—you did not mean the east tower!”

“The oak chamber in the east tower,” repeated he in an authoritative tone. Gillian, without farther hesitation, prepared to obey, by taking from a cupboard an enormous bundle of rusty keys, and desired Olivia to follow her:—they proceeded through several spacious apartments, that still contained proofs

proofs of former grandeur, to a long passage, at the end of which was a staircase, the entrance to it was by a grated iron door. It was a considerable time before the key, which Gillian bore in her hand, would open the wards.—“It is many years since the lock was opened (said she)—I think Pedro needed not to have pitched on this tower for a sleeping-room—but I dare not disobey him.”

At length she opened the door, and ascended a winding flight of stone stairs, that sent back a hollow sound at every step—the air felt damp and chilly.—

Having entered the oak chamber, Gillian kindled a fire on the hearth, and began to air the bed and linen: as she was doing so, Olivia endeavoured to obtain some knowledge of her future destiny, by asking to whom the castle belonged.

—“To the baron Ranspach” was the

answer.—“ Ah ! too surely is my misery complete (cried the wretched girl)—tell me, my friend, I conjure you, for what purpose I am brought hither ?”—Gillian was then as uninformed on this head as herself—she answered, she hoped no bad one, and added, “ To be sure, I never care to enter this tower, for they say it is haunted—but you look so innocent and so good, that I dare say nothing will harm you.”

“ I wish (answered Olivia) that I had no reason to dread the living more than I do the dead.”

Gillian having quitted her, she fastened a bolt on the inside of the door, and falling on her knees, earnestly committed herself to the care and protection of heaven : her spirits insensibly became more composed, and the fatigue she
had

had lately sustained, both of body and mind, disposed her for that quiet repose, which the silence of the place invited. She slept profoundly, till the morning sun irradiated the apartment, when finding herself sensibly refreshed, she arose, and took a melancholy survey of her apartment:—it was large and gloomy, the oak wainscoting having acquired the blackness of ebony: she saw no door, save the one she had entered—this appeared to her a pleasing circumstance: from the window nothing but sea and sky were to be discerned—she opened the casement, but on looking out, her head turned giddy at the prodigious depth below: the rock on which the castle stood, was elevated a stupendous height above the level of the sea, and some fishing boats at that time beneath, seemed to her view, scarcely to exceed the dimensions

of a cockle shell. All hope of escape appeared for ever annihilated.

Gillian, rapping at the chamber door, was readily admitted.—“ I am glad to see you look refreshed, madam (said she)—the place, to be sure, is bleak and rather dreary, nevertheless it is healthy. —I have lived here these twenty years, and never had an hour’s sickness.”

Olivia, not disposed to enquire the nature of the climate, again attempted to soften the old woman into pity of her condition; but Gillian had by this time received such information as Pedro thought fit to give, and therefore said, that she hoped soon to see her lord Edmund’s wife.

“ Rather may I find a grave !”

“ That

“That now, to my thinking, is foolish talking—when I was young, I was said to be coy as you may be—but when my lord comes——”

“Is he coming?” in a tremulous voice.

“Pedro says he will follow hard after—may be in a fortnight or so.”

“I hope not—at least, before that time, may I become a pale corpse.”

“Marry come up, I trow—why should not a handsome young lady like a handsome lord?”

“A pre-engagement might prevent it, Gillian.”

“Aye, there it is—you should not, madam, have said, that you liked another better—that is it which enrages him.—Goodness heart, how I laughed to hear Pedro tell the story.”

“What story?”

“Why, as how, when you sent him such word, he was like to run the man that brought it through with his sword.”

“Did this divert you, Gillian?”

“To be sure it did—to think how foolish the poor fellow looked.”

“You forget that his life was probably in serious danger.”

“What of that!—Great folks you know, madam, may do what they will—my lord had a right to kill him outright, if he liked—that’s for certain.”

Accustomed to freedom of condition, and liberality of reasoning, Olivia was both surprized and shocked at the servile insensibility of this woman; for though she supposed the condition of

vas-

vassalage might be justified by the feudal tenure, she could not have imagined, there were any of that oppressed class of people, who voluntarily submitted to its arbitrary sway. Gillian, born the property of the Welsted family, was brought up with ideas perfectly assimilated to her servile condition ; and Olivia was satisfied, that in a mind, degraded even below brutal insensibility, no generous sensations could ever be excited ; she therefore relinquished the attempt, and composed herself to seek that help from the exercises of devotion, which no human means could procure. Now, indeed, was the period arrived, when those sentiments of piety, which St. Leger had instilled into her young mind, were to become a source of elevating and substantial consolation.

She

She went down stairs in order to partake of the morning refreshment, and with the view, if possible, of exploring the several avenues and apartments of the castle ; but she found all her motions vigilantly watched by Pedro, and she retired again to her chamber, where from the window, her pensive eyes watched the undulating waves below, and her bosom heaved many a sigh across the deep, to the few kind beings, whom she could imagine interested in her happiness. As she continued in this posture, a thought darted into her mind, that could she procure ink and paper, it might be possible to drop a letter into one of those fishing boats, which frequented the shore beneath. Fortunately, her pocket-book contained a scrap of blank paper, on which with a pencil she wrote about three lines to the Count

de

de Blore, and inclosed it in another paper, earnestly conjuring the person, into whose hands it might fall, to assist the conveyance of it to Bareges. Having prepared her packet, she fastened to it a piece of lead from the window, the better to facilitate its descent, and then waited the approach of a boat with trembling impatience..

All that day, the solitary ocean was all she could discern. At her request Gillian brought her food into the chamber, and she resumed her station at the window. Towards evening a fishing-boat appeared, but kept at a distance from the shore: without daring to flatter herself with success, she waved her white handkerchief in the air, and to her joyful surprize, found that the signal had been noticed, for the boat drew nearer, till it
came

came exactly under the tower: with an eager joy she dropped the packet, and watching its descent, saw it reach the boat. Nothing farther could be ascertained—but she breathed a fervent ejaculation for the success of her scheme, and closed the window with a sweet sensation of hope.

That night, whether sleeping or awake, she could not precisely say, but she thought she saw a woman standing at her bed-side.—It so forcibly impressed her imagination, that she drew aside the curtain—the apparition had disappeared. After some reflection, she was persuaded, that it had been merely a dream—she could not however, compose herself to sleep, but lay ruminating on her wretched condition, till Gillian, as on the preceding morning, rapped at the

the

the door, and soon took notice that her eyes looked heavy. She replied, that she had not rested so well as before.

“ Sure, madam, you have not seen any thing !”

“ No—I have only had a dream.—but come, pray tell me, what reason there may be for supposing this tower haunted?—what should make people fancy a thing of this kind ?”

“ You must know, madam, that my lord’s first wife died in this tower, and, as I think, in this very room.—Some think she did not come fairly by her end—but for my part, I know nothing of the matter.”

Olivia, with a sigh, replied, that she wished she had nothing worse to apprehend than a visit from the deceased
baro-

baroness. When Gillian had left her, however, she could not forbear ruminating on the subject:—from what she had formerly heard from Bertha, in Wales, there remained little doubt but the first baroness was really murdered.—That the bloody deed should have been perpetrated in that very apartment, seemed to convey an idea of terror—but the dread of what she had to expect from lord Edmund's arrival, soon put it out of her mind: she also felt the hopes, which she had lately cherished respecting the packet, a good deal depressed by the consideration, that should intelligence of her situation actually reach the chateau de Blore, the most dreadful crisis of her fate would probably be passed before her deliverance could be expected.

That

That day she observed to Gillian, that she should like to look over the castle : the other replied, it could not be done without Pedro's permission, which she would endeavour to obtain. In the afternoon, Gillian came into her room, and telling her that Pedro was gone out, offered to show her the castle. Olivia readily accepted the offer, and having descended into the hall, was for entering a passage at the farther end of it : Gillian declined attending her, lest (as she said) Pedro should return and miss her. Olivia, whose motive was a hope of discovering some way of escape, proceeded alone along some of the lower passages, till she came to a room, the floor of which was strewed with human bones ; among them lay a dagger, rusted with blood—the floor also appeared stained with blood. A deathly coldness thrilled

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through her veins, and she was retreating with precipitation, when turning short about, she saw the gloomy Pedro issuing from a dark passage, with a lamp in one hand, and a bloody knife in the other. At this sight she fell instantaneously to the earth, and on recovery found herself in the hall, Gillian standing on one side of her, and Pedro on the other. With a mind dreadfully impressed by what she had seen, which could excite no ideas but those of blood and assassination, she wildly cried—
“Tell me—I conjure you, tell me how long I have to live?”

“That (answered Pedro, in a hollow voice) depends on yourself—I have at present no orders to dispatch you.”

Saying this, he commanded her return to the east tower, adding, that he should

should take care to prevent such curiosity in future. Gillian, apparently affected by her distress, attended her thither, and administered a cordial that soon produced a refreshing slumber. It was the dusk of evening when Gillian left the tower, and as Olivia, too enfeebled to rise, lay ruminating on her horrid situation, scarcely knowing whether to dread or welcome the murderous apprehensions she entertained, she saw, or thought she saw, a lady robed in white at the farther corner of the apartment—it stood some minutes and vanished.—“Surely (exclaimed Olivia aloud) this can be nothing more than fancy—but if it should, what have I to fear from an aerial phantom?—would there were no more serious evil to be apprehended.”—That night she slept not at all, and more than once imagined she heard a rustling

sort of noise in the room ; but she saw nothing, and therefore ascribed the sound to the wind, which whistled in the tower, and by frequent gusts shook the bed she lay on.





CHAP. XV.



A few more days had rolled their weary round, when the unhappy captive accepted an invitation from Pedro to walk in the garden, or rather, she durst not refuse his command to that purpose. Probably he was somewhat alarmed by the feeble condition to which the terrors of her mind had reduced her, and as they moved slowly along, he said—"It goes against me, to confine a handsome young damsel in such a place as this—

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but

but it is my duty to obey my master—and for your own sake, lady, I would advise you to come to terms with him.”

Flattering herself that this address discovered a faint dawn of sensibility in his callous bosom, she hoped to soften him still farther, and therefore replied, “Unpleasant services require more than ordinary reward—but if a superior reward would follow a good and generous action, would it not be wise to pursue it?”

“Reward!—(pausing)—you have no friends, I think.”

“Thank heaven, I have, and affluent ones—such friends, good Pedro, as would deem half their fortunes little enough to reward those, who should be so brave as to effect my deliverance.”

Pedro

Pedro paused again, and shaking his head, replied—"This will not do, lady—I well know that you have no friends of this sort."

"The baron himself is one of those friends who would reward you."

"With a halter (interrupted he dryly)—Look you, lady, I am at present engaged to the young lord, and when I shall have finished his business, it will be time enough to look out for a new master—but I much question (with a horrid grin) if the baron may have any jobs to my taste."

Convinced by this shocking irony, that he was incapable of admitting an honest or humane impression, Olivia forbore to say any thing farther, and desired to return into the house, which

Pedro

Pedro agreed to, but told her, that he had killed a brace of woodcocks for supper, and invited her to stay below and partake of them. As his requests were more properly commands, she sat down in the hall, till the evening began to close, and then retired to the tower, under the same despondency and terror with which she had quitted it. Opening the door rather suddenly, she saw the white phantom glide swiftly a-cross the room, towards a corner where it immediately disappeared. Satisfied that this object was not the creature of fancy, she hesitated for a moment, whether to enter or return to the hall—"But what (cried she) should I fear from this poor perturbed spirit, once like myself, the victim of cruelty and villainy?—yet surely in the grave the wretched may find rest."—As she spoke, she thought she

she heard a sigh, but could see nothing. She now determined within herself, that should the phantom appear again, she would speak to it :—" Perhaps (thought she) it may have something to reveal, and I shall thus procure it rest."— Whether she would have found courage for this, or not, nothing farther disturbed her that night, and she rested better than she had for some nights done.

On the following day she heard Pedro ordering Gillian to prepare an apartment for lord Edmund, who he expected would arrive within a few days. A cold sweat instantly bedewed Olivia's pallid face, which Gillian observing, said with a gross laugh,—“ That she could not but wonder at young madam's apprehensions—were she but young and handsome, she would act more wisely.”

Much

Much more of this sort passed between her and Pedro, shocking to the ears of Olivia, who, though the evening was dreadfully tempestuous, left their wretched society for her own solitary apartment in the distant tower. Here, as she leaned pensively at the window, she beheld the ocean, as it were, uplifted from its bed, while the waves, lashing the rocks with tremendous roar, shook the very foundations of the castle—deep rolling thunder reverberated from cloud to cloud, and the scarlet lightning seemed to render the atmosphere one dreadful blaze. In the midst of this awful combustion of angry elements, a white object seemed to appear before the dark wainscoting. Olivia, absorpt by her melancholy contemplations, fixed her eye on the spot, but could discern no distinct figure, till a vivid flash of lightning cast a
momen-

momentary blaze, during which she distinctly saw a woman of a sweet benign countenance, looking stedfastly upon her. Now was the time of executing her former resolution—but instead of speaking to the apparition, she uttered a faint involuntary shriek, and the phantom instantaneously vanished.

The tempest at length subsided, and she retired to bed, half wishing, half fearing that it would again become visible: for she now felt familiarized to its appearance, and had moreover discovered more to encourage, than terrify her in its aspect. She blamed herself for having shrieked, and it is probable, that had the spectre at this moment appeared, she would actually have addressed it—but this it did not do. Hollow

gusts

gusts of wind continued to rock the tower, and she listened to the melancholy sounds, till slumber once more closed her eyes, and procured a temporary suspension of her misery.

She had now been a fortnight in dreadful captivity, when one evening, the sound of the bugle horn announced the approach of guests—a trampling of horses followed. Olivia's heart died within her, and she sat in dreadful suspense, when Gillian came up with the information that lord Edmund was arrived.—"He seems very wroth (added she) and vows to make you suffer the utmost of his vengeance."

"He will kill me then!—Ah! my glad soul shall bless him for the charitable deed!"

"I sud-

"I suppose (resumed the old woman) he will not murder you immediately, and perhaps not at all, if you do not provoke him. Pray, dear lady, receive him kindly, or I fear he will be cruelly revenged—but I have begged him to give you this one night—and so now, on my old bended knees, let me entreat you to consider well—methinks I could not bear to see you murdered."

"This one night!" (reiterated Olivia faintly)—her eyes, as she spoke, were turned to heaven with awful expression, and suicide became the settled purpose of her soul.—"Yes (resumed Gillian)—this one night—I think, however, and so does Pedro, that my lord would actually marry you, if you can convince him that you do not like another man better."

“That I will never do—death from lord Edmund’s hand would be more welcome than a wedding-ring.”

“If that is your mind, lady, I say no more—beware you share not the fate, which others have done before you.”—

With these words Gillian left the room in displeasure. Olivia bolted the chamber door—“The fate which others have shared! (repeated she)—that, doubtless, is murder; and most likely, the poor ghost which haunts this apartment, is the shade of one who fell a victim to licentiousness and cruelty.” With agitated steps she passed the solitary apartment, often reiterating—“this night—this one night!” At length the castle clock beat twelve—all was profound silence. She drew a pen-knife from her pocket—“This one night!” cried she, with an accent

accent of mingled horror and resolution. At that moment a faint light gleamed through a part of the wainscot—she beheld it suddenly open, and the phantom stood apparent with a burning lamp in her hand. In a voice more mellifluous than terrible, it said,

“Dare you escape?”

Olivia answered firmly—“I dare.”

The apparition beckoned her, and she followed through a long narrow passage, to a flight of steps. Having descended these, another passage presented itself, terminated by a second flight of steps. Olivia paused—her spirits began to recoil, and as she stood in trembling hesitation, the figure, looking back on her, said—“Be not afraid—I am no phantom, but will conduct you to safety: she then went swiftly forward,

and Olivia, all amazement, followed in silence, through a long subterraneous avenue, which appeared to her level with, if not beneath the foundations of the castle---a narrow iron door appeared already open, by which they passed to some stairs: as they ascended, the wholesome breeze began to invigorate those powers of respiration, which the foul air of the passages had sensibly obstructed, and in a few moments after, the twinkling stars appeared in the blue canopy of heaven. Olivia, and her fair conductress, were now in an area, surrounded by the nodding ruins of an ancient monastery. Here the lady stopped, and seemed preparing to depart; but Olivia, catching hold of her robe, entreated her not to leave her, exposed to the power of lord Edmund. Her companion looked somewhat embarrassed

sed at the request, but at length taking her hand, led her into a part of the ruin, which had formerly been the cloister: at a certain part of the pavement, she rapped with her foot thrice, and presently a trap-door opened beneath, and they descended together into a small room, which appeared neatly furnished, and lighted by a silver lamp. A decent looking woman of about forty, expressed much joy at the lady's return, after an absence longer than had been expected. She then brought refreshments, and the lady kindly importuned Olivia to partake of them.—“ You have (said she) nothing farther to apprehend from the wretches within the castle, as I am assured, that the passage you have escaped by is entirely unknown to them; and here you may repose in safety, till some

method can be devised for conveying you to your friends."

Olivia, who had scarcely allowed herself to believe her wonderful escape to be a blissful reality, and not the work of sanguine imagination alone, now dropped on her knees, pouring out such lively effusions of gratitude and joy, as brought tears of generous sympathy into the eyes of her benefactress, who, after embracing her with great tenderness, advised her retiring to a pallet-bed in the farther apartment, in order to take that repose which her exhausted frame manifestly required.





CHAP. XVI.

EXCESSIVE joy is scarcely less the enemy of repose than excessive sorrow. Olivia slept little, yet felt much refreshed, when the lady came to her bed-side, to invite her to partake the morning repast. The apartment admitting no light from without, was illumined by the silver lamp, as on the preceding evening; the female attendant was the only person besides the lady, that inhabited this subterraneous abode, which, gloomy as it
neces-

necessarily was, contained some indications of elegance, and the little furniture it contained was of the richest kind. The lady was evidently of no vulgar rank ; she looked of a middle age, and her countenance, which once must have been beautiful, had an interesting sweetness, mingled with an air of melancholy ; her gesture was that of mild dignity, and every motion of her eye expressed sublimity of sentiment. “ You are, doubtless, amazed (said she to Olivia) at finding a living creature thus immured in subterraneous obscurity—I cannot, however, satisfy the curiosity which such an incident must have excited in your bosom. I shall be known to you by the name of Emilia ; and perhaps, at some future time, may entrust the whole of my story to that confidence, which even now I feel that your ingenuous countenance

nance prompts. Suffice it at present to say, that the billet you dropt from the window of the tower, was fortunately delivered into my hands, and from that time I meditated the means of delivering you; too well knowing the savage character of your keepers, not to suspect, that some diabolical design was on foot respecting you. The connection of these ruins with that part of the castle, happily favoured my intention. Parted from you only by the wainscot, I was often an invisible witness to your solitary griefs; yet it was necessary for me to observe the utmost caution in my endeavours of redressing you. The report of the tower being haunted, gave me an opportunity of trying your fortitude and discretion; for so peculiar are my circumstances, that had I found you a timid

self I feel that your ingenious counte-

flippant creature, I must have relinquished all interference in your case, distressful as it was. The first visit I made you, was in the dead of night: your countenance, as I surveyed you sleeping, greatly interested me; and your discretion, in concealing the circumstance from Gillian, animated my endeavours of serving you. It was my intention to familiarize you to my appearance, before I revealed myself, and was pleased to find you gain courage at every repeated visit: mean time, I caused the castle to be watched, and at length was informed, that the abandoned Edmund was actually arrived. From that moment I never quitted my station behind the wainscot, where I waited the favourable moment of assisting your escape."

Reite-

Reiterated acknowledgements on the part of Olivia, and of sympathy and kindness on that of the lady, beguiled some succeeding hours; when Beatrice suddenly exclaimed, with a look of unutterable terror—"Sure, madam, I hear voices above!" The lady put her finger on her lip, in token of silence, and they all three remained still as death, when a trampling was heard overhead. Olivia turned pale—Beatrice, with a trembling hand, extinguished the light—and Emilia sat in silent anxiety. In a few moments all was still, and they heard no more. Prudence suggesting the necessity of profound silence, a few whispers only passed between them, for the remainder of the day: at length, a watch pronounced it eight o'clock. Beatrice often looked anxiously to the trap-door, and after some time, said in a whisper—"Where, madam,

madam, can Joseph tarry thus long?"—"I cannot surmise (answered the lady)—but his delay alarms me." As the time stole heavily on, clogged with anxious impatience, Beatrice could no longer command her feelings—she began to weep bitterly. Emilia's countenance discovered great and dreadful apprehension, while Olivia, not venturing to enquire who it was they expected, sat in trembling dread. At length, the castle clock struck one—a gentle rap was heard at the trap-door. Joseph appeared, but his countenance was solemn, and his air disturbed. "Madam (cried he to Emilia) I fear you are discovered—I was coming with provisions at eight o'clock, as usual, when I luckily glimpsed lord Edmund and Pedro examining the ruins. I had but just time to hide within the cloister, when I saw them enter the court above.

above. Oh! how I quaked! As it happened, they did not see me, and I heard Pedro, with a dreadful oath, telling lord Edmund, that he was satisfied the lady must be concealed somewhere about the ruins. "Then get workmen" (cried my lord) "and to-morrow morning, the very foundations shall be razed—but keep the business a secret." "—Let me alone (answered Pedro) for that."—So away they went together, and Pedro has actually engaged several hands to attend as soon as day breaks. Ah! my lady, we are all undone!"

"I fear so, Joseph—but what can we do in this dreadful exigence?"

"Why, madam, for the matter of that, I hope we shall do pretty well—for finding how matters went, I bethought me of getting ready a boat,

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F

which

which now lies behind the cliff—but, I beseech you, be speedy, for there is not a moment to lose.”

Olivia's sensations were now unutterably distressing. She perceived that her deliverance from the castle had proved an occasion of serious distress to her benefactress. It was not, however, a time for words. The lady, rising up with great firmness, put a couple of caskets into her pocket, and bidding Joseph lead the way, she took Olivia's trembling hand with much tenderness, and the whole party proceeded in silence to the beach, where lay a boat: they hastily embarked—and Joseph managing the oar with great dexterity, immediately put to sea.

The

The full orb'd moon serenely shone on the bosom of the deep, now gently swelling with soft undulating waves, while several stars darted refracted gleams on its placid surface. No sound, save that of the dashing oar, disturbed the awfully pleasing silence: the rocks reflected the lucid splendor, above which the black turrets of the castle appeared, in gloomy majesty.

“Whither, madam, (cried Joseph) must I steer?”

“Where you will (in a desponding tone)—all shores are, to me, alike inhospitable.”

“Let us go to France” (exclaimed Olivia eagerly)—but Joseph observed, that they could not expect to make so distant a shore; he would endeavour to gain some port of the north. Presently

after, they discerned a sail ; it proved a brig bound to Antwerp, the master of which made no difficulty to take them aboard. With transport unspeakable, Olivia entered the vessel ; all dread of pursuit was now at an end, and she gave full scope to the rapturous emotions of her soul. Joseph and Beatrice expressed no less satisfaction in the safe asylum now obtained. Emilia alone was unmoved ; her deportment was that of cheerless apathy, on which no joy could make impression. Olivia followed her into the cabin, and again renewed her grateful acknowledgements, animated by the pleasing hope, that she should soon be enabled to return, in some measure, the generous conduct of her new friend, by procuring her a welcome retreat in the chateau de Bloré. Emilia, with a deep sigh, said to her, “ For you, dear
Olivia,

Olivia, I trust, the sweet pleasures of social endearment await near at hand—but for me, expect it not.—I have long been the child of sorrow, and meet the world as a cheerless void, more to be shunned than avoided.—The tomb which I have been forced from, was become congenial to my taste—I quit it with regret, for there I hoped to expire, unseen as unlamented—a convent, now, can only be my choice.”

Notwithstanding the fervor with which this declaration was uttered, Olivia could not relinquish the idea of reconciling her amiable benefactress to society, as soon as she could procure the assistance of the count and madam de Blöre. Having passed some time in the cabin, and seen Emilia perfectly calm, she quitted her to go upon deck,

from whence she beheld the red dawn reflected on the waters. Her mind was now serene, or rather, it was animated with new-born joy. She saw the rocks on the continent, which the vessel rapidly approached, catching the rising light, and tinged by the soft tints of Aurora: the ocean was all one ardent gleam; innumerable sea-fowl performed their morning evolutions in the air; those notes, which late she thought harsh and discordant, now sounded musical in her ear: in fine, the august scene awakened in her breast that sweet enthusiasm, which she had often experienced as the source of the most refined pleasure; and as the vessel advanced along the Scheld, the richness of the rural scenery, on either side, exceedingly gratified those delicate perceptions of the soul, with which the forming hand of nature

nature had endowed her. In a frame of mind, to which she had long been a stranger, she, with Emilia and her two faithful attendants, were safely landed at Antwerp. In their way to the inn, Olivia saw the doors of a church thrown open, and heard the swelling organ resounding through the sacred dome: with the full flow of new-born happiness pressing at her heart, she entered, and poured forth those elevated effusions of pious rapture, which partake of celestial sublimity.

The bosom of Emilia, no less attuned to refined sensibility, was dead to joy; a cheerless apathy pervaded it. "I rejoice (said she) if in any thing I can be said to rejoice, in the felicity which irradiates your gentle mind, my Olivia. Alas! for me, no such sensations are prepared

pared—the social affections sleep here (laying her hand on her breast)—never to awaken more.”

Olivia, with a grateful and affectionate embrace, wept tears of sympathy on the pallid cheek of her friend, whose story she wished to know, but dared not attempt to penetrate the mystery which seemed to envelope it. Joseph, whose honest simplicity might be expected favourable to this natural curiosity, was extremely guarded on whatever related to his lady, as was likewise her attendant Beatrice. Olivia was therefore compelled to wait the assistance of time and chance, to elucidate the point which she was wholly unable to comprehend in the remotest degree: one of her first employments, was that of writing to the count de Blore, to whom she gave a circumstantial

stantial detail of all which had befallen her, and by necessary consequence, mentioned her benefactress in the highest terms of admiration and gratitude. Having dispatched the letter, she resolved to remain with Emilia, till the expected answer should arrive: mean time, that lady diligently enquired the state of the several convents around the city, with a view of fixing on one for the final retreat of herself and Beatrice; but she determined not to enter, till Olivia should be securely lodged with her friends.





CHAP. XVII.

THE time which must necessarily elapse before letters from France could be received, threatened both the fair fugitives with painful suspense. Their apprehensions of pursuit from lord Edmund received vigour from probability, and the natural reflection which their defenceless situation suggested, could be no other than that of terror : yet as the corporeal faculties are rendered more vigorous by exercise, so also are the mental. Patience

ence and fortitude were lessons, which both had learned in the school of adversity, and they were now effectual to support the mind, under the alarming ideas which presented themselves. Emilia, who was the oldest practitioner in the philosophy of the passions, was anxious to compose those of her young companion, and therefore, to prevent her suffering too keenly from the ardour of her own imagination, she one day produced a roll of old manuscript, so much injured by time, as scarcely to allow the characters to appear legible.

“ These (said she) I found in a corner of my late subterraneous abode.— As you are fond of versification, my dear Olivia, it may amuse you in decyphering those old characters, and modernizing their present obsolete dress ;
though

though I will not promise you, that their merit will repay the trouble of transcription."

Olivia, who felt that any thing would be preferable to the suffering her mind to prey on itself, readily undertook the task, and produced, at various intervals, the following composition :

The HERMIT,

A LEGENDARY TALE.

...

DEEP in a vale, remote from mundane cares,
 An hoary sage had pass'd successive years:
 Oft seen the sun the summer solstice gain;
 Oft seen stern winter ravage all the plain:
 Refin'd by converse with the power on high,
 He look'd, he spake, a native of the sky,
 Each wish resign'd, and tranquil each desire,
 Yet all his soul glow'd with celestial fire.

When

When morn her splendors open'd to the view,
His grateful praise rose with th'exhaling dew,
And when the night her sable curtain spread,
His humble pray'r drew safety round his bed ;
Calm and compos'd he sought his wonted rest,
Then sunk in sleep by heav'nly visions blest.
Thus in primeval ages dwelt mankind,
Ere vice deform'd, ere luxury refin'd,
Had taught them wants which nature never knew,
And o'er their days the veil of mis'ry threw.
How blest the swain, who 'midst his native dell,
Delights with fair simplicity to dwell !
In rural peace, in rural duties, lives,
Nor dreams of bliss, beyond what nature gives.
His is the peace the world can ne'er bestow,
His the pure pleasures, that from virtue flow.—

Close by the shore where rolls the foaming wave,
Within a rock, was scop'd the hermit's cave ;
The roof with beauteous crystals glitter'd round,
And shells, and moss, adorn'd the fossil ground,
One seat he boasted, and but one alone,
His hand had form'd it of the rugged stone ;
An unwrought plank well serv'd him to sustain
His cruise of water, and his viands plain :
Yet at his humble board wou'd peace preside,
Peace which ne'er dwells with luxury or pride.

And had the gross voluptuary seen
The healthful vigour of our hermit's mien,
No more he'd prize the dang'rous gift of wealth,
But ask of heaven a frugal meal and health.

Altho' retir'd, the good man lov'd to dwell,
Yet not unsocial was his humble cell ;
Hither the neighb'ring swains wou'd oft repair,
To speak their pleasures, or unfold their care :
In all their joys he bore an equal part,
In all their sorrows freely shar'd his heart,
Nor deem'd it tedious, mis'ry's tale to hear,
His lips gave counsel, and his eye a tear.
Had any gone from virtue's path astray,
He help'd the wanderer to regain his way ;
Spotless himself, his soul cou'd ne'er deride
An erring brother from religious pride ;
But like that heav'n, which warm'd his gen'-
rous breast,
He wou'd that all shou'd as himself be blest.
Intent on viewing nature's wonders o'er,
Each plant and herb he anxious wou'd explore,
Thence learn their uses, and cou'd well apply
Their simple powers to ev'ry malady ;
With esculapian lore his mind was stor'd,
He heal'd the wounded, and the sick restor'd.

No

No wonder, then, that thro' the village train,
A fame so just shou'd precious yet remain.

One summer's eve, as dusky shadows fell,
The hermit sat before his much-lov'd cell;
Strephon, a social swain, had penn'd his flock,
And homeward bent, drew near the well-known
rock.

The reverend man his kind regards engage,
He nods respectful, and salutes the sage :

" Be blest, my son," the hoary father cries
(While love and kindness animate his eyes)

" But why such haste?—thy limping steps declare

" Thy strength exhausted by thy daily care ;

" Then hither turn, and rest thy weary feet,

" Friendship invites, and frugal fare shall greet."

The swain accepts, nor further bidding needs,
(The call sincere, all studied forms exceeds)

With friendly haste, by gen'rous motives led,

The hermit soon his frugal stores had spread ;

The table groans with vegetable pride,

And milk, and fruits, the banquet well supply'd :

Such viands well wou'd please the swain, he knew,

Whose simple taste fram'd no superior view ;

They ate, they talk'd, time gaily pass'd along,

Nor ask'd loud riot, nor the mirthful song :

Mean while, the moon rose o'er the distant rocks,
Illum'd the wave, and shone on sleeping flocks ;
The heav'ns in azure clad, whilst not a cloud
Night's gentle empress near her throne allow'd ;
'Twas all serene, for scarce the ebbing wave
Was heard, the beach with murm'ring swell to
lave.

Then Strephon thus—" Forgive, oh ! gentle sire,
" If my bold wish one question wou'd inspire,
" Fain wou'd I know whence thou of all thy kind,
" The best, the wisest, and the most refin'd,
" By taste the strangest, shou'd prefer to dwell
" Deep in the silence of this pensive dell ?
" For surely nature, who ne'er works in vain,
" Cou'd ne'er design thee for an humble swain.
" Our shepherds all unanimous declare,
" None can in wisdom with thyself compare ;
" My thoughts, I own, do oftentimes incline
" To judge thee born in some bright court to
shine :
" Then say what motive, or what fate severe,
" I ween not choice, cou'd lead thy footsteps here ?"
As thus he spake, the hermit heav'd a sigh ;
A glist'ning drop stood trembling in each eye ;
He wip'd them off, and mildly thus reply'd,
" Thy doubts, kind shepherd, shall be satisfy'd ;
" The

" The story's long—yet see the lambent moon
 " Wants many a step, ere she attain her noon;
 " And if soft sleep refrain thine eyes to close,
 " Attend—I'll tell thee all my tale of woes:
 " Know, I was born in Gallia's fertile clime,
 " To wealth, to splendor, was inur'd betime;
 " My sov'reign's favour crown'd my early years,
 " Bestow'd me honours, and bestow'd me cares;
 " The weight of office long approv'd I bore,
 " Was courted, flatter'd—what wou'd mortal more?
 " Alas! I lov'd—the object of my flame
 " Was lovely, virtuous, and a British dame;
 " Her sire, for refuge, to our land had fled,
 " When with intestine wars Britannia bled;
 " Bereft of fortune in a humble spot,
 " He, with Lavinia, liv'd and mourn'd his lot:
 " 'Twas here he careful form'd her docile mind,
 " To all that's amiable in woman-kind;
 " In face, in stature, how divinely fair
 " Her soul!—oh! shepherd, what a soul was there!
 " Ardent I lov'd—the pure seraphic flame
 " Warm'd all my breast, and thrill'd thro' all my
 frame:
 " Her heart, all candour, knew not how to feign;
 " Marriage I ask'd, nor did I ask in vain:

"Marriage! blest word—yet disallow'd by fate,
 "My rank, my wealth, my office in the state,
 "Forbade the bliss—envy my steps had trac'd;
 "Resign the maid, or hopeless sink disgrac'd,
 "Was the sad mandate from my royal sire,
 "Disgrace! (I cry'd)—what's that to love's pure
 fire?
 "Thou menace poor—'tis now I'll firmly prove,
 "Nor wealth, nor honours, can be ought to love;
 "Treasures I spurn, nor know I of disgrace,
 "But that of absence from Lavinia's face;
 "I sought the fair, renew'd my vows of love,
 "She, blushing, heard me, nor cou'd disapprove;
 "Pleas'd to resign the pageant pomp of state,
 "We dreamt of bliss beyond the pow'r of fate;
 "But when next morn, as op'd the golden day,
 "Towards her father's gate I bent my way:
 "What scenes of woe my scatt'ring senses greet!
 "Loud sighs and tears burst forth in all I meet:
 "Th' attendants all, in mournful sables clad,
 "Each step was solemn, and each face was sad;
 "Lavinia's dead!—aghast I heard the sound,
 "Then sunk in terror, breathless on the ground;
 "They bear me lifeless from the doleful spot,
 —"My woes, my feelings, and my love forgot.
 "But

" But soon returning life my grief renews,
 " I mourn in secret, and relief refuse :
 " In vain each pitying friend indulgent strove
 " To chace the mem'ry of my hapless love ;
 " Nor time, nor friends, my grief-worn soul cou'd
 cheer,
 " Nor heav'n itself, for that I deem'd severe :
 " At length, one ev'ning, past the close of day,
 " I stole unseen towards the busy quay ;
 " A ship I found, that waited but the breeze,
 " To waft it swiftly to the northern seas ;
 " A gleam of joy shot thro' my sullen breast,
 " 'Tis done (I cry'd) and I may yet find rest :
 " Some lonely island, or wild howling waste,
 " Shall yield fit scenes to feed my gloomy taste ;
 " There to the pond'rous rocks, or hollow waves,
 " Black mountains' summits, or deep ivy'd caves,
 " I wou'd my melancholy tale unfold,
 " And hid from man, in solitude grow old ;
 " Then join, when life's sad vacuum shall be o'er,
 " My lost Lavinia on th' ethereal shore.
 " And now the crew the lucid sails extend,
 " Brisk gales arise, their welcome aid to lend ;
 " We leave the coast—the Gallic shore's behind—
 " And prompt with hope, scud swift before the wind.
 " The

“ The sun, bright rising ’bove the foaming main,
“ With ruddy beams ting’d all the wat’ry plain ;
“ ’Twas all serene—the crew full bumpers ply,
“ To prosp’rous breezes, and a friendly sky :
“ Ah ! short-liv’d triumph !—ere two days had past,
“ Black rising clouds the horizon o’ercast ;
“ Tremendous tempests lash th’ affrighted deep,
“ And boist’rous winds with wide destruction
 sweep ;
“ Against a rock the fated vessel drives,
“ She splits !—nor of her hapless crew survives,
“ But he, whom fate relentless, will’d to save,
“ Nor give the boon I wish’d—a wat’ry grave :
“ My passive form th’ officious billows bore,
“ Yet warm in life, towards this rocky shore.
“ Ah ! why (I cry’d) are those, who valu’d life,,
“ Blest by fond infants, or a faithful wife ?
“ Doom’d to the deep, while he who courted death,
“ Curst with existence, draws blasphemous breath ?
“ The storm was o’er,—these rocks this flow’ry
 green
“ Arose to view—a grand, a beauteous scene ;
“ Yet I, ungrateful, sicken’d at the sight,
“ And eager sought to shun the irksome light :
“ This cave I found—to its cool shade I fled,
“ And murm’ring deep conceal’d my guilty head.
“ Yet

" Yet here not long in black despair I lay,
" Ere sov'reign mercy lent a kindly ray ;
" Its gracious influence whisper'd to my soul
" Rebellious wretch ! thy guilty grief controul ;
" Know that to suffer is ordain'd to man :
" Then who art thou, that wou'dst derange the plan
" Contriv'd by wisdom, fram'd by love divine ?
" To will is heaven's, to obey is thine."

" As from some dreadful dream I gradual wake,
" My breast grows tranquil as the peaceful lake ;
" Ingrateful tempests shook my soul no more,
" My rage subdu'd, and swelling passions o'er :
" I, wond'ring, view'd my late rebellious mind,
" Ador'd offended heav'n, and grew resign'd ;
" I sought religion, and from its lessons drew
" Pleasures sublime, substantial, ever new :
" Since then, in this lov'd spot, this tranquil scene,
" The hours flew on, wing'd with delight serene.
" Ten years had pass'd, when I one morn arose,
" And saw the sea a dreadful scene disclose :
" Shipwreck'd, a bark hung, beating on the coast !
" The crew—the cargo—all, alas ! was lost :
" Wide o'er the shore, an awful ruin spread,
" Divided masts, rich bales, and sea-drench'd dead ;

" I ran

- " I ran with speed, if yet my cares might save
 " One hapless victim from the angry wave ;
 " At length I saw, amidst the foaming surge,
 " A female form, now sink, and now emerge ;
 " I brav'd the waves, I waded thro' the tide,
 " With fruitless efforts long unwearied try'd ;
 " How'er, at last, heav'n gave me what I sought ;
 " The floating victim in my arms I caught,
 " I bore her breathless to my peaceful cave,
 " With anxious care, reviving cordials gave ;
 " The blood, long chill'd, began at length to flow,
 " And the pale cheeks with languid life to glow :
 " But shepherd, say, what words shall I employ,
 " To paint my hopes, my terrors, fears, and joy ?
 " When in that form, as warm with life it grew,
 " My ravish'd soul its own Lavinia knew.
 " Oh ! bliss, too great for mortal man to bear,
 " Her heart confes'd me, and impell'd a tear,
 " My Lindor !—now I thank th' auspicious pow'r,
 " That gives this sight to bless my final hour,
 " To thy lov'd arms restor'd at last to die,
 " Oh ! height of bliss—Oh ! glorious destiny !
 " Joy's potent tide suspends reviving life,
 " I die thy own—thy lov'd—thy faithful wife ;

" Yet
 " Whose friendly counsels her lone youth

“ Yet ere the bands of death my voice with-hold,
“ Let me, my Lindor, briefly thus unfold
“ That fatal story, fram’d but to deceive,
“ And my decease compel thee to believe.
“ Know that my sire, still anxious for our weal,
“ The mournful fiction fram’d in tend’rest zeal;
“ To stem the impetuous torrent of thy love,
“ Till happier times shou’d more propitious prove,
“ Our pow’rs he deem’d unequal to engage
“ A sov’reign’s anger, and a parent’s rage,
“ And hop’d, good man, thus wisely to disarm
“ Their gath’ring fury, and avert the storm.
“ I bow’d in silence to my sire’s decree,
“ While all my soul was full of love and thee;
“ To a lone spot we secretly withdrew,
“ And pass’d our days unknown to public view.
“ Hope, that reluctant quits the human mind,
“ Inspir’d my soul to bear its woes resign’d;
“ At length by death of my lov’d sire bereft,
“ A friendless stranger— a sad orphan left—
“ I vainly sought thee, and of all I meet,
“ My Lindor’s name with anxious look repeat:
“ I hear, that led by black despair to roam,
“ Thou’dst left thy kindred and thy native home.
“ Who now the lost Lavinia cou’d protect?
“ Whose friendly counsels her lone youth direct?
“ The

" The British land I sought once more to gain,
 " And breathe my sorrows in my natal plain,
 " But heaven forbade.—Ah! why shou'd I repine?
 " What friend's embrace can be so sweet as thine?
 " No ling'ring wish a natal land inspires,
 " Thy arm's the home my fleeting soul desires.—
 " As thus with warmth the sweet Lavinia spoke,
 " From her dim'd eyes a gleam of transport broke;
 " Transient its stay, for now life ebb'd apace,
 " A deathly paleness veil'd her lovely face :
 " To her cold lips my trembling hand she prest,
 " Breath'd her last sigh, and mingled with the
 blest."

The hermit paus'd—the shepherd heav'd a sigh,
 And drew his hand across his moisten'd eye :
 Deep silence reign'd—well knew the gen'rous
 swain,
 To griefs, so poignant, words wou'd flow in vain.
 " If e'er thy breast (at length the sage resum'd)
 " The tender feelings of the heart illum'd ;
 " If, gentle Strephon, thou didst ever know
 " The keen delight—the luxury of woe—
 " Then follow me along the moon-light glade,
 " To the sad spot where her lov'd course I laid.
 " Hast

"Hast thou not mark'd yon willow gently wave?
"Its sacred shade points out Lavinia's grave:
"There has my hand the wild thyme taught to grow,
"There the cold snow-drop early learns to blow;
"There, from the vulgar eye, I oft retire,
"And from her ashes catch ethereal fire:
"From the cold sod those sacred feelings rise,
"Which ope th' eternal portals of the skies."

Now o'er the grass the dews of ev'ning lay,
Their pensive footsteps brush the dews away;
They reach the spot—the pale moon glimmer'd
round,

And show'd a mound, by twining ozers bound.

Emotion deep then shook the hermit's frame:

His quiv'ring lips pronounce Lavinia's name:

Lavinia's name, the hollow rocks resound;

Lavinia's name, deep echoes catch around.

But as to kiss the sacred earth he drew,

Effulgent rose a splendid form to view;

A flow'ry wreath her radiant temples bound,

And lovely ringlets grac'd her neck around;

In one fair hand a golden harp they view'd,

While one extends to where the hermit stood:

Scarce whisp'ring breezes the dead silence brake,

Ere in soft strains the heav'nly vision spake:

“ The hour is come—those hands on earth ally’d,
“ Time’s sluggish current shall no more divide ;
“ For thee I’ve dress’d the amaranthine bow’r,
“ Cull’d sweet perfumes, and each celestial flow’r :
“ Well hast thou done the work by heav’n assign’d,
“ Thy patience exercis’d—thy will resign’d ;
“ The reign of pride, of passions rage expir’d,
“ Thy soul refin’d—with pure devotion fir’d ;—
“ Enrich’d with lib’ral streams of social love,
“ And thus prepar’d, to join the choirs above,
“ Possess the seat which now to thee belongs,
“ And chant high raptures ’midst angelic throngs.”

A gleam of joy suffus’d the hermit’s cheek,
He smil’d triumphant, yet with transport meek ;
His silver’d head sunk lightly on his breast,
And his glad spirit flew to join the blest.





CHAP. XVIII.

DURING their continuance at the inn, Joseph one day returned to it, with a countenance of alarm, intimating, that he had something of importance to disclose to his lady. Emilia bade him speak out. “Then, madam (returned he) we are discovered! I just now met a gentleman, who accosted me with—“ Pray, friend, do not you belong to the “ ladies, who lately came ashore at this “ city?”—“ I should like to know your

“ reasons for asking,” quoth I. “ Nay,” quoth he “ I only wished to ask, if one “ of them be not the lady Ranspach ?”

“ And what reply did you make ?” cried Emilia, trembling.

“ I said, madam (sullenly enough, and quaking with fear) that I did not see how that matter concerned him—and so I hastened back to tell you.”

Emilia, catching Olivia in her arms, exclaimed,—“ Adieu, my young friend, adieu for ever !—I thought not to have quitted you before the arrival of your friends—but fate determines otherwise.”

Olivia, dreadfully alarmed by the apprehension of being pursued by lord Edmund, did not distinctly mark the peculiarities of Emilia’s language: supposing, however, that she was about to faint,

faint, she went and threw open the window for air—when the first object which struck her eye, was Theodore, standing opposite the window: he looked earnestly at her for a moment, then made a cool bow, and walked on. As she stood motionless with astonishment, Joseph, who had also observed him, cried—“There, madam—that is the very person who asked me those questions.”—“Then I have no cause for alarm (returned Olivia) but much for amazement.” A deep and heavy sigh escaped her as she spoke. Turning to Emilia, she added—“Suppress those terrors, my dearest benefactress: this is no lord Edmund, but one whose breast never admitted a mean or malignant sentiment.”

“You know him, then,” said Emilia, impatiently.

Olivia, to this interrogatory, made no reply, but burst into a flood of tears. That her long-loved Theodore, who from infancy had manifested towards her, the most ardent and constant affection—who so lately had urged her to crown his passion by instant marriage—should thus view with chilling coolness, and studiously fly the presence of that object, when there was every reason to expect it would have excited the liveliest transports of joy in his breast, was no less inexplicable, than it was mortifying and afflictive. Lady Edith's passion darted into her mind, and amidst the confusion of her ideas, she sometimes inclined to believe, that Theodore had sacrificed his affections to his interest, and that lady Edith, descending from her former elevation of sentiment, had condescended to be happy with the man she loved.—

While

While a varying train of painful conjectures floated in her brain, Emilia requested half an hour's conversation alone; and as soon as she entered the apartment, she said to her, while with great tenderness she folded her to her breast—"With my resolution of retiring from the world, for ever, dearest Olivia, it was also my intention to bury the story of my sorrows in eternal oblivion—but I see so much goodness and candour in you, that I no longer hesitate to own, that I am really that unfortunate person, which this stranger suspects me to be; though by what means he could have acquired the least tincture of such suspicion, is a mystery unfathomable."

Olivia, far from comprehending the latter part of this speech, expressed her feelings by a look of surprize and enquiry.

enquiry. Emilia observing it, resumed :
“ You recollect, that my faithful Joseph was questioned, if one of us were not the lady Ranspach.—Ah! my sweet young friend, I am too surely that ill-fated woman.”

“ You, madam, lady Ranspach!—
What can this mean?”

“ You, doubtless, have heard, that the first wife of the baron Ranspach died in childbirth, about twenty years ago. I am that injured wife.—Yes, dearest Olivia, you now see the very woman who is supposed to have been dead and buried thus long.”

Olivia, instantaneously impressed with horror, of what she imagined the perfidy and cruelty of the baron, uttered an involuntary shriek, and exclaimed—

“ Alas!

“Alas! by what standard shall we estimate virtue, if that of the baron Ranspach is specious?”

“Alas! (replied the lady) my husband is more unfortunate than culpable—he knows not that I live—may he never know it. I was married to that best of men, at an early age, and for some few years, enjoyed with him all the felicity which mutual truth and love could secure. His father, whom I will still call Welsted (though in fact, possessed of a title) appeared satisfied in our conjugal happiness, till he happened to form a connection with a Norman family, of high rank and great wealth. From this time, I remarked, that his behaviour to me was less kind than before; yet could not have allowed myself to suspect, that his characteristic ambition and avarice could suggest a plan, inimical to the sacred

cred ties which had united me with the amiable Rufus : yet I have abundant reason now to conclude, that from such base motives. it was, that he engaged my husband in a military expedition. I was pregnant, when my beloved Rufus was compelled to separate from me, by an authority which could not be resisted ; and I, desirous of passing the period of his absence in retirement, removed to that castle, which was late your prison, Olivia ; and soon, alas ! I found it destined to be mine. Mr. Welsted, on various pretexts, deprived me of the attendance of my own domestics ; and on my arrival in the Orkneys, I found two male attendants, and Beatrice, then a stranger, appointed to wait on me. These were all the inhabitants of the castle—at least all that I was permitted to see. I presently found the men to be no other than

than my gaolers ; however, in the society of the honest Beatrice, I bore this irksome constraint some months, comforted by the idea, that lord Rufus's return would amply repay all which I should suffer by his absence. At length, I was delivered of a son, whom, for some days, I was allowed to gaze on with maternal rapture. One day, as I held him in my fond arms, I felt an unusual drowsiness oppress me—I fell into a slumber—but oh ! my Olivia, even now I tremble at the recollection of my feelings, when I awoke in a dungeon ! To that horrid cell I was conveyed, while sleeping, and left for two days, to bemoan my wretched fortunes, unseen and unpitied. On the third, Benedict, one of the two male attendants, came into my dungeon with food ; I demanded the cause of such barbarous treatment, and he told me,

me, in brief, that his master, Mr. Welsted, had contrived the plan, by which lord Rufus was to be persuaded that I was no more, in order that he might be prevailed on to marry the Norman heiress. "It is (added the wretch) your wisdom to be patient."

"Ah! my son (I exclaimed) my sweet infant!"

"Is alive (resumed he) and for his sake, as well as your own, be resigned to the fate which you never must hope to escape from. The moment you are refractory, you die."

To a wretch, like me, condemned to perpetual imprisonment and darkness, instant death must have been considered as a welcome release; yet something bade me live, to behold my son once more.

more. I submitted, therefore, to the dreadful fate, from which I could not escape, with sullen calmness: the meekness with which I yielded to my unjust and cruel destiny, procured me from this Benedict a more lenient treatment, than otherwise I should have obtained: besides supplying me regularly with provisions, he brought me books, drawing materials, and other helps of beguiling my heavy hours; he comforted me also with assurance, from time to time, of the health of my son and husband, and distantly encouraged those hopes, I secretly nourished, of beholding those dear objects again. About three years of my lonely captivity had elapsed, when he informed me that my child was dead, and added intelligence yet more afflictive—that my husband, the generous, the tender, and almost adored lord Ru-

fus, was married to the wealthy heiress,
 for whom, it now appeared, I was thus
 barbarously sacrificed. By this cruel
 blow, all my fond hopes, those hopes
 which had enabled me hitherto to sup-
 port my sorrows, were annihilated in a
 moment, and I sunk into an apathy,
 that left me scarcely conscious of exist-
 ence. In this condition of mind, I
 dragged on two more tedious years:
 that I existed through such a period,
 can only be ascribed to the dreadful
 stupor of my soul: hopeless misery,
 by blunting the acuteness of my feelings,
 sustained that life, which the keen edge
 of sensibility would have happily soon
 extinguished.

"One day Benedict entered my dun-
 geon, with a look of wild disorder, and
 a dagger drawn in his hand. I doubted
 not but he came, in order to inflict the
 death

death I desired ; and starting from my dark seat, I cried with impatience—
“ Strike—strike—and I will thank you
“ for the welcome benevolence.” He
stood irresolute—his hands shook, and
horror unutterable flashed from his
haggard eyes. In a tremulous and hollow voice, he replied.—“ Not against
your life is this weapon meant, but my
own—I came to die in your presence,
and thus to atone the injuries you have
suffered by my vile instrumentality—
but first, take those keys, and escape
from this dungeon, while opportunity
serves—yet be careful that the murderous
Pedro see you not.”

“ I stood gazing on him with incredulous astonishment, without offering
to take the keys, which he held out in
his hand, or indeed wishing to quit my
cell, the horrors of which were now be-
come

come congenial to my soul, while in the same accent of ineffable anguish, he resumed—"Welsted, your cruel enemy, is dead—I saw him—I tell you, I saw him die." Here he heaved a deep and heavy groan, his eyes rolled wildly, and his countenance became more aghast than before.—"Die! (reiterated he with dreadful emphasis)—madam, I have seen him die—a death-bed—ah! Benedict will not endure its excruciating solemnity—sooner than feel one of those pangs, which tore the blood-stained fleeting soul of Welsted, I will rush into eternity, while conscience sleeps—I will die by my own hand, that the sting of death may be unfelt."

"At that moment he lifted the dagger to his throat—I seized his arm.—"Unhappy man! (I cried)—knowest thou not, that the sting of death pursues beyond

yond the grave—rather live, and make thy peace with offended heaven.”

“What peace! (he wildly replied)—Is there mercy!—mercy for me!—and can you even wish it for me!”

“Yes, Benedict—even now, my heart implores it for thee.”

“Ah! can you forgive! forgive injuries that are irreparable!”

“I do indeed forgive thee—live, and be also forgiven by thy final Judge.”

“His aspect became more composed, the dagger fell from his trembling hand, and he dropped on his knees before me.

“You pardon me (he resumed)—you bid me live.—Ah! words of heavenly peace!—you have prevailed, most amiable sufferer, and I will obey you—but every moment that I breathe shall testify the deepest remorse that ever wrung a human

breast, and shall be devoted to the severest austerities of deep-felt penitence."

"He then took a bag of gold from his pocket. "Here (added he) is the reward which Welsted's will has awarded to my iniquity—take it, madam, to procure your future support. If you refuse these pieces, this cell shall for ever hide them—deep in the earth shall the vile price of my iniquity be buried—deep—deep as the grave which holds my accursed employer."

"Here he began to turn his eyes with more wildness, and groans deep and piercing seemed to rend his very soul.

"I would accept your boon (I replied) were it necessary—but while my Rufus lives, I cannot fear indigence."

"Madam (with a look which I shall never forget) reflect that lord Rufus lives

not

not for you—he has long believed you dead—he is the husband of another, and the father of a new race. Would you distress him, by discovering the full extent of his wrongs?—however, you are at full liberty to act as you please—I shall be far beyond the reach of his vengeance—yet might I advise, it were unkind to wring this fatal drop of misery into his already embittered cup.”

“You are right, Benedict—I will not wound his noble soul by a knowledge of wrongs beyond the power of redress—may peace and domestic concord crown his life—he shall never know that his Emilia lives, since to know were to be wretched. Such is the cruel destiny which the black ambition of a father has spun for an only—a deserving son.”

Benedict commended the prudence and generosity, as he termed it, of my deter-

determination: he advised me to repair immediately to the cottage of Beatrice, "who (pursued he) has never ceased to mourn your supposed death, and with her you may retire to some peaceful obscure asylum—but oh! (and he spoke with an energy which chilled my soul with terror)—oh! beware of Pedro! my vile associate in the injuries you have sustained; he knows not that you live, but as well as Welsted, concluded that I left you to perish by famine long since, in obedience to the commands they gave me to that end. This man, whom nature formed for deeds of darkness, is devoted to the Norman family, and should he ever know you are alive, his savage soul would drink your vital blood."

"I was now conducted from my dungeon, and accompanied by Benedict, went to the cottage of the faithful Beatrice—

trice (whose rapture on the occasion I stop not to describe). He there gave me my jewels, acknowledging that he had preserved them for a very different purpose, and then took a melancholy leave, intending to retire to some convent of the strictest order.

“After a short time passed in the cottage, I was convinced that security was by no means to be found there; and wandering about one moonlight night, amidst the ruins in which you found me, I discovered a recess suited to my purpose, to which, with the faithful Beatrice, I resolved to retire. Joseph, her brother, undertook to supply us with provisions, and honestly, as well as punctually, did he execute his engagement. It must be my care, before I leave the world finally, to reward his long-tryed fidelity; if, indeed, he is not above all re-

reward, which this temporal scene can yield him. And now, my Olivia, having concluded my unhappy story, I will make an enquiry which, till now, I have been restrained from. How fares it with my dear Rufus?—is he well?—is he happy?—does the present baroness supply to him the place of his Emilia?”

“That (returned Olivia) would not be in the power of any human being to do, though possessed of far greater merit than the Norman lady; nor dare I, madam, assert that the baron is happy, though his greatness of mind enables him to support his feelings, without unavailing complaint.”

Emilia burst into tears at this reply. “It is many years (said she) since I knew the luxury of weeping. I thought sorrow had changed my breast to marble,

ble, but I find it tenderly sensible of my poor Rufus's sufferings."

Some minutes afterwards, Emilia enquired of Olivia concerning the gentleman who had busied himself so singularly about them : this drew from the latter a full disclosure of her situation, in regard to Theodore. Beatrice having been present, begged leave to observe, that it seemed probable, the gentleman's mention of lady Ranspach, applied to Olivia, from a supposition of her being actually the wife of lord Edmund. The conjecture, which had much of rationality on its side, proved a sensible relief to the apprehensions of her lady, but inflicted a deeper pang in the breast of Olivia, who readily perceived, that in order to obtain Theodore's belief of such a circumstance, much art must have been

been employed. Lady Edith's attachment was thought on; and in such a case, Olivia may be deemed pardonable, if both the agent and the motive were not, at this time, totally unconnected with the idea of her ladyship.

Emilia, much tranquilized, agreed not to enter on the conventual life, till letters should have arrived from France. She deemed it proper, however, both for her friend's satisfaction, and her own, to speak with Theodore, and accordingly deputed Joseph on the errand, who, at his return, gave the following account: "When I came up with the gentleman, please your ladyship, he was at the head of his men, just about to march out of the town, with drums beating, colours flying. I desired leave to speak a word with him, on which he stepped a little
aside,

aside, and I said, "The lady at the inn desires to speak with your honour."—"What have I to do with the lady," quoth he, and then he gave me such an angry glance, as seemed to shoot through my soul. "How dare you (quoth he) insult me by mention of that lady?"—and then he turned short away, mounted his horse, and was out of sight in a moment."

This incident, productive of mortifying disappointment to Emilia, was more than Olivia could meet with external composure: she burst into a flood of tears, and even bitterly reflected on the perfidy of lady Edith. Emilia's tenderness and sympathy were deeply interested in her distress; nor could she advance any thing in mitigation of it; for as she herself

candidly acknowledged, the tendency of her prejudices forbade her to allow any thing great or generous in any of the Norman race.

CHAP. XIX.

SOME days before the time, which Olivia had fixed in her mind for the arrival of letters from France, she was made happy by the presence of both the count de Blore and madam his sister: their joy at meeting her, after the perilous

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circumstances she had encountered, was expressed rather by tears than words. To Emilia, whom they justly regarded as her deliverer, their deportment was highly grateful and affectionate; and without having heard her story, they requested her to spend some time at their chateau, before she took a final leave of the world.

“ You must permit us, madam (said the count) thus to testify gratitude, for the inestimable benefit you have rendered a young creature, whom we consider as our daughter. Accompany us to France, and if, after some time, you still adhere to your intention of retiring to a convent, one may possibly be found in our neighbourhood, suitable to your choice; and we may, at least, have the satisfaction left us, of sometimes visit-

ing a lady, to whom we are all so much obliged. As for honest Joseph, he has been so instrumental to our dear girl's present happiness, that henceforth his welfare must be my care."

This cordial invitation, enforced by the friendly importunity of madam de Blore, and the tender entreaties of Olivia, was the more acceptable to Emilia, as she really preferred France, and as it would afford the opportunity of perpetuating an acquaintance with Olivia, to whom she felt herself maternally attached. On the following day, therefore, the whole party sat out for the chateau de Blore, where in due time they arrived, without meeting with any remarkable occurrence on the way. As soon as they had entered that hospitable mansion, madam de Blore, throwing her
arms

arms round Olivia's neck, exclaimed, "Now, my dear child, we separate no more—I can allow no friendship henceforth to seduce you from our arms—yet (politely bowing to Emilia) perhaps I ought not to regret this perilous adventure, since it has procured us the acquaintance of so amiable a lady."

"The manner of its attainment (re-joined the count) is wonderful; and I own, I am prompted to admire the courage of our dear girl, in so boldly venturing to follow what she supposed a ghost."

"Very little merit attaches to me, my lord, on this point, if the horrors of my condition be adverted to."

"As little as you allow it, my dear (said Emilia) few persons, I am persuaded, would have discovered so much.

fortitude. "However, I dare swear, you will henceforth laugh at the notion of ghosts and spectres."

Unfortunately for Olivia; the remembrance of the old Welch castle presented itself to her mind, and she made no reply. Emilia observed her embarrassment, and when they were alone together, said to her, "I was sorry to have reason, just now, of suspecting, that some popular errors of opinion lurk in the mind of my young friend."

Olivia readily comprehending her drift, replied, "It is, I know, the business of reason to eradicate error, my dear madam—but it has a stubborn antagonist in the senses. I own, I should gladly be convinced that mine, on some former occasion, deceived me." She then

then related the several excursions of Theodore and herself to the castle in Wales, adding, the general opinion which prevailed in the neighbourhood respecting it. Emilia looked serious, and owned, that she perfectly remembered old Welsted, to have been frequently urged on his reasons for suffering that fine old mansion to sink into decay : she recollected also, that he always gave an evasive answer. “ But my dearest Olivia (pursued she) might not the repugnance of such a man be reasonably ascribed to the power of an evil conscience, rendering him averse to solitude.”

“ And yet, madam, neither Theodore or myself could owe what we both saw and heard, to the force of conscience. It is also certain, that no human being
either

either could or would reside in such a place."

"Well (cried Emilia, after a pause) let us drop the subject. We must acknowledge, that our reason may sometimes be puzzled, where it cannot entirely be convinced."

The polite and friendly assiduities of the count and madam de Blore, and the almost filial attentions and endearments of Olivia, could not be experienced by Emilia, without awakening that sensibility, which seemed so many years to have lain dormant in her breast; and if not entirely reconciled to the world, she at length began to imagine, that a residence in the vicinity of this amiable family, might not be less eligible, than retirement in a monastery. While she

de-

debated the point within herself, Olivia received the few effects she had left in London, and which, since her return to France, she had written for: they were accompanied by a letter from lady Edith, adapted in good measure to dissipate the unfriendly suspicions that, in spite of herself, she had occasionally indulged. From hence she understood, that Theodore, pursuant to the intimation he had given her, arrived in London, shortly after she had been so vilely betrayed into the power of lord Edmund. The grief and disappointment of that faithful lover on the unhappy occasion, were warmly described by her ladyship, who ingenuously confessed also, that the whole family were prompted to conclude, she had voluntarily quitted the baron's protection.—“ But ought I (concluded lady Edith) to have admitted that thought!—

I,

I, who knew both the wickedness of lord Edmund, and the sincerity of my friend. Yet, my Olivia, I blush to own, that I was at length brought to concede to the general opinion. You had, to all appearance, departed voluntarily—force could not have been employed in my father's house, who also spent that evening at home—and art we did not suspect: for surely none but depraved minds could have suspected the arts which were actually employed to beguile you, particularly as lord Edmund was, at the very time, at court, and did not leave home till near a fortnight after your departure; yet when he did leave it, we made no scruple to conclude, it was in consequence of previous appointment: for though I knew you superior to an illicit amour, I was not certain that your heart would remain insensible to the assiduities
and

and external attractions of my unhappy brother, when (as I knew to be the case) he should make serious and honourable proposals. Can we be forgiven those unworthy suspicions, which surely must be allowed natural? Alas! my injured Olivia, all I can say in excuse is, that to have acted as you would have done, in a similar case, I must first have been actuated by your nobleness of mind. I have written to Theodore, impatient to undo what a too hasty conclusion effected; for I must not conceal, that at the end of two days he left London, under the idea of your being the wife of lord Edmund. But you are already avenged—the wretched author of your sufferings totters on the brink of dissolution; and to his remorse, we owe the knowledge of all you have suffered by his baseness. How shall I write the catastrophe—

tastrophe, which succeeded your happy escape from the Orkneys?—a bloody catastrophe!—yet I will relate it.

“ Know then, my sweet friend, that on the morning after your escape was discovered, the rage of my unhappy brother alighted on the miscreant Pedro, whom resolving to sacrifice to his fury, he confined in the east tower; while himself, more fierce than a tyger disappointed of his prey, roamed from room to room, making them resound with his bitter imprecations. In a short time, he was surprized at seeing Pedro enter at the gate—he had discovered the avenue which led to the ruins. Concluding you secreted in some part of them, they had razed the very foundations: a subterraneous apartment, that appeared to have been recently occupied

piet, excited their wonder, without procuring the satisfaction sought for. In fine, lord Edmund, raging with all those malignant passions that never had known a check, drew his sword, and wreaked his vengeance on the vile agent of his iniquity; but in the same instant he buried the weapon in the diabolical heart of Pedro, he was himself wounded by a dagger, which the wretch plucked from underneath his cloak. In fine, Pedro fell weltering in blood, and yielded his ferocious soul in curses on his murderer. Lord Edmund lies dangerously ill, incapable of being removed: he is attended by his mother, who has now a sad occasion of lamenting the fatal consequences of her own errors.

“ I pause, my Olivia, to ponder on the awful commission which is some-

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times

times given, of punishing iniquity with iniquity."

" And I (cried Emilia, having read the letter) ponder also, with sacred awe and admiration, on that concatenation of events, which has avenged my wrongs, on the very spot in which they were committed, both on the immediate instrument of them;—and that race, for which the horrid mind of Welsted conceived the death of me, and my helpless innocent offspring."

Both ladies, deeply impressed by the awfulness of the event, indulged in silence their respective meditations. To Olivia, a dawn of hope presented itself, as soon as her mind could be disengaged from the horror, which for some time oppressed it. Lord Edmund himself
had

had cleared her innocence—Theodore was still faithful—lady Edith artless and sincere. She had, from infancy, been accustomed to connect every idea of happiness, which an ingenuous mind could admit, with that of Theodore; and however heroically she had of late opposed the force of female resentment to his supposed inconstancy, she found it extremely difficult to divide them. Her heart was sensible of an irksome vacuum, which neither the tender endearments of the count and madam, nor the social pleasures which their mansion afforded, could ever fill. But at length, a more pleasing train of thought awaited her, and every feature of her open countenance manifested the satisfaction of her heart.

Sitting one morning after breakfast with the count and madam de Blore, she took up the little casket that contained her most valued memorandums, and which she had newly received from England : on opening it, to examine the several deposits she had left in it, the first article that appeared, was the ring bequeathed her by Mr. St. Leger : she kissed the precious token of endeared remembrance, and as she did so, dropped a tear of grateful and tender recollection. She next drew out the tablet, which had belonged to her mother—the count fixed his eye on it with particular attention—“ Surely (he exclaimed) I must have some knowledge of that pocket-book—pray, sister, look at it.”

Madam de Blore took the pocket-book into her hand—she appeared agitated

tated. "Olivia (she cried) be so kind as to inform me, by what means this article came into your possession?"

"It was the property of my mother, madam."

"Your mother! (reiterated the count)—if it be the tablet I took it for, the cyphers G B-H B are within the covers."

"They are there, my lord. Oh! say—can you inform me of their import—assist me, I entreat, to trace a mother's name."

She had started from her chair, and in the energy of her action, let a ring fall from her lap. The count took it up, and the motto catching his eye, he exclaimed, in a voice of strong emotion, "Oh! my much-loved Henrietta—these

well known trifles were unquestionably yours." He then questioned Olivia of her birth, and she repeated the particulars which Margaret had acquainted her with. The count, without speaking, caught her in his arms ; madam de Blore was suffused in tears, and an awful silence succeeded. Olivia, trembling with feelings which she dared not utter, was the first to speak—" Oh ! sir—oh ! madam, I conjure you, inform me what this unusual perturbation means."

The count continued some minutes, struggling with emotion too strong for utterance. At length he articulated—" My niece !"

Madam de Blore threw her arms around her ; but Olivia was insensible to her caresses—she had fainted—and her
head

head declined, destitute of motion, on the friendly arm which supported it. At length, recovered by their aid, she appeared to awake from some pleasing dream :—" What have I been thinking ! (cried she)—fain would I enjoy more of the pleasing illusion."

" Her intellects (said madam de Blore) are momentarily disturbed.—Be composed, my love, and hereafter you shall know more."

" I am calm now, madam.—Pray tell me something of my mother ?—can you inform me who she was ?"

" She was (returned madam) our dear sister—and you are unquestionably our niece."

Here a violent gush of tears came to her relief, after which her feelings became

came more sedate. She threw a glance of ineffable expression on the lady and the count—then said—“ Have I at last found a mother’s dear relations—and such relations as I must have loved and revered, had not the tie of consanguinity commanded it.”

“ You are, my dear Olivia (resumed the count) without doubt, the offspring of our sister—your strong resemblance to her corroborates it—that resemblance, which first interested us in your behalf, and finally engaged our affections to you.—But I will now insist on your retiring for a few hours, after which we will talk more on the delightful subject.”

Madam de Blore took her hand, and led her up stairs, requesting that she would endeavour to compose herself, lest

lest the weight of such sensations, as she had experienced, should prove detrimental to health—then drawing the curtains around the bed, she quitted her with a tender embrace.

When Olivia entered the parlour again, Emilia was prepared to congratulate her on the happy incident of the day, and to rejoice in the felicity which that incident ensured her. The count then gave the following brief account of his sister.—“Henrietta was the youngest of us, and the favourite of us all—lovely in person, engaging in her manners, and of a disposition the most sweet and generous—she seemed born to give and to receive happiness; but unfortunately, an imprudent clandestine marriage lost her the affections of our mother, who could never after be prevailed with to pardon,
what

what she deemed a disgrace to the family, and an insult to parental authority. Poor Henrietta, thus sunk, could not cease to be equally the object of love and pity, to myself and sister. We espoused her cause, as far as could with propriety be done; and at length despairing to work on the inexorable temper of the countess, our mother, I advised her to quit the kingdom with her husband, who was a man of great merit, though certainly not the person which prudence would have pointed out to her. I supplied them handsomely for the voyage, and decent settlement, and they crossed over to one of the sugar islands, where they soon established themselves in ease and comfort: the frequent letters I received from her, breathed content and happiness. After a series of years, the countess paid the debt of nature,

ture, and I then sent to invite them back to France, in order to share in the family estates; but my letter found her a widow. She consented to return, and took ship for that purpose. Alas! we were destined to meet no more on earth—the ship she sailed in went to the bottom, and as far as we could ever learn, every soul on board perished. A trusty servant, whom my sister had left on the island to dispose of the effects, landed some months afterwards in France: he informed me, that she had with her on board, an only surviving child, a female infant then at the breast. We have never ceased to lament this dear unfortunate sister, and it was with a view to lighten the gloom, which the remembrance of her fate sometimes excites, that we invited you, Olivia, to reside with us.

us. To trace in your features those of our Henrietta, was a pleasure congenial to our feelings."

" Ah! my lord (cried Olivia) how little did I imagine, that the love and reverence I felt was really an impulse of nature. But, my lord—my dearest madam—may I not be allowed to pursue her dictates, even beyond this dear mansion—will you not permit me to pay my duty to a father's relations also."

" I approve that thought, Olivia (answered he). I loved your father; and had it depended on my will, he should not have sought an asylum in America—but no more of that. I assure you, on my honour, that I know of no one relation of your father existing now in France."

She

She was silent, yet felt a little chagrined ; for however obscure her father's family might be, her heart yearned to embrace every member of it ; and had she not absolutely confided in the count's veracity, she would probably have suspected, that pride induced him to deny her that satisfaction.

Madam de Blore pleasantly said, that she would invite madam Lestrange to the chateau—" I must indulge a bit of spite (said she) in triumphing over that sordid woman, by presenting, as our niece, the young person whom she once treated so contemptuously."

" Invite that lady when you please (answered her brother)—but let it be with no malicious design.—Would you upbraid a person for defects, which they cannot mend?"

“ I am sure my brother does not seriously maintain, that moral habits are not to be altered.”

“ Madam Lestrange’s time of life, sister, is not the season for effecting it, however ; and when we reflect, that by being incapable of benevolent feelings, she is herself the loser, we ought perhaps to pity, rather than resent her want of them.”

“ And if I (said Olivia) might so far presume, I would entreat madam de Blore to spare that lady for my sake ; since, however ungracious in herself, she is the sister of him, to whom I am indebted for the capacity of enjoying that very felicity which now attends me.”

“ You are right, my dear (returned madam). To the benevolence of that most excellent man we owe it, that you
are

are now the ornament of our family ; and for his sake, I will show respect to a woman, who in herself is far from deserving it. Henceforth, when Lestranger's meanness disgusts me, as it has often done, I will whisper to myself, " St. Leger," and all resentment or contempt will instantly vanish."





CHAP. XX.

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AFTER the information which lady Edith's letter contained, Olivia daily, though secretly, expected the presence of Theodore. Day after day, however, succeeded, without realizing those expectations: she became thoughtful and restless, and frequently was discovered by her friends in such fits of absence, as excited their peculiar notice. At length, instead of himself, a letter from his hand reached

reached the chateau: by this, most wonderful events were made known—the letter itself is for that reason subjoined:

* * * * *

“ When, with rapture, with shame, and deep-felt remorse, I received at Vienna the information, which showed at one view the weakness and meanness of my heart, in allowing the unworthy suspicion, that Olivia could prove unfaithful to her earliest vows, I hastened to set out for France, to cast myself at her feet, and sue for pardon. I was on my way for that welcome purpose, when a letter from the baron commanded my instant attendance in London, on an affair of the last importance; it also acquainted me of the death of lord

Edmund, and the subsequent illness of the baroness.—Can you forgive me, Olivia, if on this occasion I obeyed the dictates of gratitude, rather than love, and hastened to offer that consolation to a generous benefactor, which I imagined his present circumstances demanded, and with a view to which he probably had required my attendance?—I know you would have despised me, had I been capable of acting otherwise.—I will then proceed to relate an incident, which is almost too wonderful for credibility.

“When I arrived in London, I found the family in sables, yet none apparently concerned for the death of the unhappy Edmund, though custom enjoined the semblance of woe. The baroness, indeed, lay the wretched victim of her misguided

guided affection : the tragical death of her son had so sensibly affected her, that together with the fatigue she had undergone in her attendance on him, it had reduced her own health to a hazardous condition. I was immediately conducted to the baron, where also lady Edith was summoned to attend :—he arose with a solemn awful air, and affectionately embraced me, but without speaking—he appeared to labour for expression—he wept. Lady Edith, equally surprized with myself, stood silent—at length he exclaimed—“ My son !” The endearing epithet struck pleasingly on my ear, Olivia, (though I think his lordship had often called me so before) and I knelt at his feet, expecting to receive his commands—but what were my feelings, when he resumed—“ Theodore—you are my true and proper son !”

“ My

“ My lord !” I exclaimed as one who doubted the fidelity of the aricular organ —“ My lord !”

“ You are my son—my first-born son. —Edith, embrace your brother, and the heir of Rauspach.”

“ I started with amazement and joy. “ Have I indeed a father ?—is my friend and dearest benefactor that father ?—— I dare not suspect your lordship means to sport with the feelings of an honest grateful heart—yet know not how to pursue so blest an idea.”

“ The baron sat down, and placed lady Edith and myself on either side of him.

“ Listen to my words (he resumed)—the time is come, when I am at liberty to own the relation which I bear you. Oh ! Theodore, I have watched over
you

you with paternal fondness—marked your progress from infancy to youth, from youth to manhood, with a father's anxious fondness ; and though I determined to educate you, and finally to provide for you as my son, yet till now I was not allowed to acknowledge the tender tie of nature."

" Here his lordship paused and wept. I flung myself at his feet—I bathed his hand with tears of rapture and filial love. Lady Edith approached me—" Nature (cried she) knew and owned her right. Blessed day, in which I can avow my love of Theodore without a blush—farewell those struggles, which have often torn my soul—it is no longer an infringement of propriety, to regard him as the first of men."

" To-

“Totally at a loss to comprehend the full import of those words, I folded her to my heart, assuring her of my fraternal love. The baron motioned us both to sit down, and he then proceeded as follows :

“It is necessary, my children, for me to explain my conduct in this instance ; though, to do so, must give me some pain, since it will occasion the mention of one, whose name I would not wish to repeat but with reverence. Your dear mother, Theodore, died in presenting you to the world, and left me the most disconsolate of mankind. In your infant caresses I found the only pleasure my bosom could admit. I placed you with a careful nurse, and all my cares and joys centred equally in the precious pledge of conjugal affection, which
my

my dear departed Emilia had left me. My father often had urged me to a second marriage, but my soul revolted at the idea—he grew more importunate, and I more determined not to plight my faith a second time. As I sat one evening in my closet, pensive and mourning the loss of a most amiable wife, two men rushed into the apartment, one of which was that Pedro who has lately met a tragical end: they bound me hand and foot, and without declaring the motive of their conduct, threw me into a deep dungeon, where I remained deprived of light, and almost of food; my hands were closely manacled, and my feet fastened to the ground by iron stocks. I was suffered to continue in this situation some weeks, when my father sent me an offer of liberty, on condition of my marrying the lady he had chosen. I firmly refused

com-

compliance—on this my imprisonment was rendered yet more rigorous, and every means which ingenuity could devise, was employed to augment its horrors. At length, worn out by famine and torture, my spirits exhausted, and my reason half deranged, I yielded to my father's proposal, and obtained my freedom. I was married to your mother, Edith, who in the course of a year brought into the world your late brother Edmund. Could any thing farther be requisite to gratify my father's ambition? Alas! there was.—As I was on a journey, attended only by one servant, we were attacked in a certain forest by three men, armed with cutlasses and pistols, and wearing masks on their faces; my servant, in bravely assisting his master, fell covered with wounds, and I was soon after totally overpowered; the ruf-

fians

fians forced me into a wretched hovel, where—Ah! horror unutterable!—the first object which presented to my eye, was my infant Theodore, stretched on an instrument of torture. The villains instantly unmasked, and discovered one of them to be the miscreant Pedro. I flew to my son—Pedro stepped before me, and pointed a dagger at the breast of my child. I called on him to spare your innocence. Do with me, I added, what you will, but spill not the blood of my boy.—I was informed that your life, Theodore, depended on myself—it was my father's pleasure that you should be disinherited, and I had in consequence no alternative, but to consent to it, or see you murdered; for too well I knew, that the will to destroy you was not wanting, and also that my father had so

well established his interest at court, as to defy any appeal I might hereafter make to law or equity. In fine, my son, to spare your life, I consented that you should be an exile from your paternal home, on condition that I should be allowed to chuse the place of your retreat, and to visit you when I wished : this was granted—but my father, deep and politic in all his measures, would not consent to let you live, until he had extorted from me a sacred oath, never to acknowledge you as a son, while any male issue of the baroness should exist. —Here then are the reasons of my conduct. William, your supposed father, was acquainted with your birth ; but his wife, whose honest simplicity directed my choice of her, was utterly ignorant of it. Under her fostering care
you

you acquired health and vigour—you early discovered signs of the excellence of your heart, and the soundness of your understanding: in a word, I saw you the entire reverse of him whom I was compelled to make my heir. But tho' had lord Edmund lived, you would unjustly have been deprived of a title and the lineal inheritance, yet I had taken care to provide you by will, the portion of a son: mean time, I resolved that no expence should be spared in your education—but here the excellent Mr. St. Leger anticipated my cares. Equally skilful in learning, and matured in every virtue, that best of men rendered you every thing, which a fond father could wish, or the world admire:—to his benevolence, I owe the purest felicity I can enjoy on earth."

“ Thus, my most dear Olivia, is the once happy careless peasant of the Welch mountains transformed into the son and heir apparent of the baron Ranspach. But what, in this metamorphose, do I find additional to happiness?—truly nothing, but the bliss of having found a father. A title can have no value in my esteem, except as it shall confer on Olivia that dignity, to which nature has so admirably adapted her. I must not omit to tell you, that I have been presented to the sovereign, as necessary to the establishment of my new privilege. I saw the beauties of the British court, adorned with all the advantages of splendour and dress; yet not one of them appeared half so lovely in my eye, as the sweet companion of my youth, the partner of my soul, and henceforth, I trust, the partner of my fortunes also.

“ The

“ The baroness continues extremely ill. Neither the manly tenderness of the baron, or the duteous attention of lady Edith, can in the least alleviate the violence of that grief, which she endures for the loss of lord Edmund ; and I suspect, the strange event which this letter apprizes you of, contributes to heighten her malady. She is informed of all, yet refuses to admit me to the smallest degree of notice. From some expressions of the baron, I doubt she was an accessory to the arbitrary and unjust measures of the old lord : if so, how in this foreign lady shall we trace any thing of the gentleness and sweetness of the female character ?—but ambition and pride have a power of petrifying the heart.

“ I dispatch this letter as the har-
binger of myself. May it so effectually

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plead

plead my apology, that my arrival at the chateau de Blore may be crowned with that welcome, which alone can truly bless

The faithful

THEODORE."

After the first tumults of pleasure and surprize had subsided in the gentle bosom of Olivia, she laid the letter of Theodore before the count and madam de Blore, who thence drew the first intimation they received of the state of her affections. They stopped not, however, to comment on that point, but proceeded to consider the expediency of imparting the wondrous intelligence to Emilia. The utmost caution seemed necessary, lest the joy of the event should overpower her intellectual faculties. Madam de Blore undertook to manage the
deli-

delicate business, and accordingly after supper, introduced the subject, by asking Olivia some slight questions concerning Théodore. Having thus drawn Emilia's attention to the mysterious obscurity which seemed suspended over his birth, she proceeded to conjecture, that he might be descended from some family of high condition.

“But what family of condition (said Emilia) would abandon such a son?”

“We know not, madam (answered the count) what sinister end might be proposed thereby, nor how far it is possible for interest or ambition to pursue it.”

“In what family, Olivia (asked madam de Blore) did the peasants, who fostered him, previously reside?”

“In

"In that of Ranspach, madam."

"Powers of mercy!" exclaimed Emilia; her face alternately changing from pale to red, and her frame visibly agitated. Madam de Blore perceived, that she had gone far enough, and therefore, without seeming to notice the effect produced on Emilia, suffered the subject to drop, leaving Emilia for the present to cherish that gleam of incoherent hope, which she had evidently caught sight of. In the morning she went early to her apartment, and found her in a meditating mood—"You appear unusually thoughtful, my amiable friend."

"We are the sport of fancy, madam—and as if life itself were not a shadow, are perpetually cheating ourselves with the airy visions of imagination."

"Come,

“Come, come—such is not your weakness, I know.—But pray tell me, what gay fancy offers to intrude.”

“None that I dare admit—but I own I have been conjecturing all the night, whose son this young Theodore can be.”

“And suppose he should be yours—could you sustain the joy?”

“Ah! generous friend—what means such a question?”

“Peruse that letter, and be convinced.”

Madam de Blore putting the letter on the table, left Emilia to herself. When the time necessary for its perusal had elapsed, she returned, and found Emilia on her knees, the most animated picture of sensibility exalted by devotion, which

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the mind can conceive. Her glowing cheek spoke the lively emotions of her heart, while in her eyes, sweetly turned to heaven, trembled the tear of gratitude and chastened rapture. She arose, and embraced Madam de Blore, yet without speaking. Olivia entering, shared her silent, though passionate caresses. After some time, she said, "This precious letter informs me also, that my Theodore will shortly be here."


"Doubtless he will, madam—yet dreams not of the bliss which waits to crown his arrival."

"Alas! my Olivia, he must never know it. It is sufficient for me to feel that this unlooked for joy was reserved to gild my evening of life—in this sweet consciousness I shall deem my past sor-

TOWS

rows overpaid—but Theodore must remain ignorant of a mother's existence."

In consequence of a resolution dictated by a delicate regard of the baron's tranquility, Emilia determined to withdraw from the chateau, in order to avoid the presence of her son, whom with a mother's fondness she yearned to embrace. Her friends knew not whether to approve or blame this resolve, and therefore prudently left her to pursue the dictates of her own mind. The superior of a neighbouring convent was known to and much esteemed by madam de Blore: with her it was agreed that Emilia should make a temporary abode.



 CHAP. XXI.

IMPATIENTLY as Theodore might be expected to set out on a journey to the continent, where the dear treasure of his soul resided, he found the expedition prevented for some time by the indisposition of the baroness, whose dissolution was daily expected; and the baron would have him pay that external respect which her relation in the family demanded. One of the first instances of

of filial confidence which Theodore demonstrated to his father, was that of acquainting him with the nature of his attachment to Olivia. The baron had too sensibly suffered by paternal pride and arbitrary sway, to adopt them in his own conduct; and though he believed Olivia to be a young person of obscure birth and mean fortunes, he made no objection to his son's choice. On the contrary, as he really esteemed Olivia, so he both applauded and encouraged that constancy and purity of affection, which the conduct of Theodore now displayed.

“Wealth and happiness, Theodore, are not, with me, synonymous terms.—May I live to witness your conjugal felicity—or the possession of the rank I shall leave you, will be a poor bequest.”

The baron had one morning stepped into his lady's apartment, to enquire as usual how she had rested, when almost close at his steps rushed in a pale emaciated figure of a woman, with an infant, half famished, hanging at her breast—her hair in wild disorder flowed over her meagre shoulders—her aspect, tho' haggard, retained the traces of former beauty, and a few miserable rags wrapped a form that once had been elegant. With a look of eloquent woe, she presented the babe to the baroness—"Look at this wretched being (cried the famished wretch)—see those purple veins—it is your own blood which flows through them.—Pity at least, if you will not relieve its sufferings."

"Who are you?" said the baron, in a voice of pity.

"I am

“ I am (replied she) the unhappy—the abandoned wife of lord Edmund, to whom this poor expiring babe owes a wretched existence.”

“ My lord (said the baroness, exerting all her remaining energy)—will you suffer the wretch thus to insult me !”

The baron bade the woman follow him to his closet, where she gave him the following relation :—“ My father rented a small farm belonging to your lordship, on which we lived innocent and happy, till on a fatal day lord Edmund saw me, and too readily prevailed on me to believe he loved. Long, however, I resisted the ardour of his passion: at last he made honourable proposals.—Beguided by youthful vanity, I saw not the impropriety of allying myself to an illustrious family—I yielded and became

his wife—our marriage was privately celebrated by your lordship's chaplain—the truth of this assertion he doubtless will confirm.”

“ Proceed (said the baron in a soothing voice)—easily can I pardon the error of an honest, though misguided heart.”

“ I thank your lordship for a goodness, which my rash presumption could never merit. Alas! I foresaw not the misery which was to spring from that one rash action. Lord Edmund, immediately on our marriage, took me to the castle in the north, where he remained with me several months : but too evidently I perceived, that neither those personal charms he had affected to adore, nor yet the love and duty which I bore towards him, had power to attach a mind sensual and capricious. He left the castle, and
from

from that time I saw him no more : but I was not suffered to leave the mansion, which now was made my prison, and in which I suffered, from a man of the name of Pedro, every cruelty and insult which barbarity itself could inflict. At length my father, ignorant of my abode, and from whom I had unfortunately concealed lord Edmund's attachment, traced me to the castle : with a broken heart he had sought after me, and finding at last into whose hands I had fallen, naturally concluded me an apostate from virtue. Trembling and weeping, he demanded a sight of his long lost child, which the inhuman wretch who guarded me imperiously refused : my father grew importunate, and was stabbed to the heart by the accursed Pedro. I heard his bitter shriek, and knew in it a father's voice—I ran to

the fatal spot, and saw this tender father weltering in his blood. He opened his closing eyes at my approach—"Unhappy girl! (he cried) for your sake I die—farewell for ever"—then with a deep and piercing groan, he expired in my arms."

"From this moment my reason became unsettled, fits of insanity occasionally seized me, and the cruel Pedro, despairing of inflicting farther misery, drove me from the gates, covered, as my raiment was, with a father's blood.—

Alas! the very winds of heaven, which roared over my wretched head, seemed to reproach me; in every gust I heard a father's dying groan, and by the pale gleam of star-light, I fancied his pale shade hovered before me. A poor cottager pitied my misery, and took me in,

where

where I became the mother of this babe. Sick and poor, even to famine, I travelled to London—I acquainted lord Edmund with my distress, and implored his pity—he was cold and unmoved—nay more, he disowned me, and threatened punishment, should I assert my claim as his wife. From that time I have scantily subsisted on alms, till this morning, urged rather by insanity than reason, I resolved to force my way into this house, and to die, as I hoped, in your lordship's presence."

The baron for some moments could not speak—his feelings had choaked the power of utterance. He rang a bell, and ordered the superintendant of his household to take care of the unfortunate woman and her child.

"Do

“ Do not (said he to her) depart from this house, till I have thought of some means for your future subsistence : in the mean time, be assured of my pity and protection.”

Very soon after this event, the baroness breathed her last—little lamented by her domestics, who had equally dreaded and detested that imperious humour, which their servile adulations had helped to nourish. The large property which she had reserved a power of disposing, she bequeathed to lady Edith, except an extravagant sum appropriated to the expences of a magnificent funeral, doating even in the article of death, on that fastidious splendour which she had idolized through life.—Decency now detained our lover, though reluctantly, in London ;

don; but he dispatched a second epistle to Olivia, informing her of the decease of the baroness, together with his father and lady Edith's earnest desire of witnessing the consummation of their nuptials, as soon as the customary respect should have been paid to the remains of the baroness.

When this second epistle reached the chateau de Blore, that amiable family were employed in a work most agreeable to their feelings. The faithful Joseph having resided thus long in the count's family, had not remained insensible to the merits of Agatha the housekeeper, who nearly of his own age, had all the dispositions calculated to render him happy in the conjugal union. The count and madam, as well as Emilia,

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applauded his choice, and the marriage was celebrated in their presence with general satisfaction; after which, the count presented him with a small farm completely stocked.—“ You are not, my honest friend (said he) to consider this gift as a favour, so much as a payment of the obligation, which I feel myself under to your courage, prudence, and fidelity—in short, it is a trifling reward of the inestimable service you have rendered your good lady, and by her means, my beloved niece also. May you always be as happy as your honest worth deserves; and while I live, I shall deem it my honour to appear on all occasions your friend.”

It was with difficulty that this generous nobleman would allow Emilia to
take

take any share in the establishment of Joseph; to gratify her generous mind, however, he permitted her to furnish the house—and Olivia, not to appear wholly ungrateful, presented them with a small flock of sheep, which had fed in the park, and been considered as her peculiar property. These engagements did not so entirely engross her attention, as to leave it regardless of Emilia's happiness.— Finding that the baroness was now no more, she properly thought, there could exist no longer any cause for concealing from the baron a circumstance, which now must so abundantly promote his felicity. With the advice of the count and madam, she immediately put Theodore in possession of the astonishing secret, leaving it to him to apprize the baron of the pleasing fact, in the manner
he

he should deem most prudent ; and she prepared Emilia for what might reasonably be expected to follow, by informing her of the death of the baroness ; which having done, she with a light heart and enthusiastic visions of future felicity, left the matter to take its due course.



WE stop not to describe the effect which this intelligence had on the baroness ; suffice it to say, that a very short time brought him, with Theodore and lady Edith, to the chateau de Blon. But who shall paint the transports of the happy trio ?—or pretend to say, whether the workings of conjugal or maternal affection, were the most predominant in the bosom of Emilia at that interesting moment.



CHAP. XXII.



WE stop not to describe the effect which this intelligence had on the baron; suffice it to say, that a very short time brought him, with Theodore and lady Edith, to the chateau de Blore. But who shall paint the transports of the happy trio?—or pretend to say, whether the workings of conjugal, or maternal affection, were the most predominant in the bosom of Emilia at that ineffable

moment, when she encircled in the same warm embrace, a husband long lost to her, and a son restored, as it were, from the regions of the dead? Prudence commands us to draw a veil over that scene, which no language could prove competent to describe.

The meeting of lady Edith and Olivia was that of two persons of equal tenderness and congenial virtue—a crimson tincture slightly tinged the cheek of either, as they remained locked in each other's arms—both blushed at the consciousness of having, though momentarily, thought meanly of each other—but all unpleasant remembrances were quickly forgotten, and the most complete and general satisfaction ensued. Lady Edith was presented to Emilia (now the baroness) and received with that sweet benignity,

nity, which had ever marked that lady's character ; while on the other hand, lady Edith felt herself forcibly impressed with all the veneration and esteem which that character justly demanded.

The baron cordially embraced Olivia, professing that the addition of herself only was wanting to render his family circle the loveliest and happiest in the universe. Here followed, to the surprise and pleasure of the whole English party, the wonderful discovery that had recently been made of Olivia's birth and connections—" And now, sir (added the count, addressing himself to Theodore) —you who so generously preferred my lovely niece, at a time when she appeared so much your inferior, cannot but be my choice, when she is possessed of birth and fortune equal to your own

—you are worthy of each other, and ought no longer to be divided.” He then presented Olivia’s hand, which Theodore gracefully pressed to his lips, and replied—“ Olivia, my lord, will adorn a splendid rank, but can derive no accession of excellence therefrom. Oh ! most honoured St. Leger (added he in an impulse of grateful enthusiasm) —why are not you, blest saint, present to witness the happiness, which is the sweet product of your own virtues !”

“ Let us imagine (replied the baron) that he both witnesses and enjoys it.— Certainly, if the departed have any consciousness of human affairs, such a scene as this of to-day must bring large accessions of felicity to the celestial condition of that most excellent of men.”

Theo-

Theodore was urgent for the nuptials to be celebrated at the chateau—but to this the baron objected, alledging, that such an event ought properly to take place in that country, where his natural influence and property mostly lay; and proposed, that the count and madam de Blore should return with them to England, previous to the ceremony taking place.

“I never was a friend to punctilio (replied the count, smiling) and therefore, without insisting on a better reason, I readily acquiesce in the plan. To say truth, your lordship has hitherto had so little of your own way, that I think you must be indulged in it now.”

This pleasant sally of politeness and good humour pleased every body, and it was accordingly agreed, that the whole

party should set out for England in a day or two at most. That period, short as it was, effected a new turn to the sentiments of lady Edith, who despairing of being able to discover, in the whole race of mankind, a degree of excellence equal to that which she had been tenderly sensible of in Theodore, began to view the masculine world with the harsh eye of a misanthropist. Among the many visitors of rank, who paid their respects to the count and madam de Blore, was the marquis Villeroy, a young nobleman, who to the accomplishments of person and manners, united those of a refined taste and cultivated understanding; possessed both of wit and good humour, he had also the vivacity which characterized her ladyship, and was therefore the more agreeable to her taste. Having seen
much

much of the world, and studied mankind with the keenness of a penetrating genius, he could also become the serious intelligent companion, whenever the occasion required: in fine, the versality of his abilities rendered him an acceptable visitor in all companies, as the sweetness and generosity of his temper endeared him to his more intimate acquaintance. Her ladyship had inspired him with sentiments of the tenderest kind; and those who knew her best, were convinced that the impression was mutual.

On the day appointed for the commencement of their journey, the baron, baroness, and madam de Blore, sat out in one carriage—the count, Theodore, and Olivia, in a second—lady Edith, agreeable to her own request, sharing a third with the faithful Beatrice. The day

day was nearly shut in, when they entered a forest, which lay between them and the village, at which they designed to pass the night: the way through the forest was long and difficult, and the evening speedily advanced. As the village was already in sight, the servants were ordered to go on, in order to prepare accommodations for the party, while the carriages followed with as much speed as the nature of the ground would admit. Unfortunately, that which contained the count, &c. was delayed by an accident, occasioned by the incautiousness of the postilion, who driving too near the trunk of a decayed tree, shivered the wheel of the carriage in pieces: the lad's dexterity, however, with Theodore's assistance, so far repaired the damage, as to enable them to proceed, though slowly and with caution. Before this could be effected,

effected, the other carriages were out of sight, and the horizon was one profound gloom, admitting not a single gleam of light—the air was sultry—and they imagined they could hear the rolling of distant thunder.

“The storm approaches (cried Olivia)—Good heavens! what will become of us?”

“Be not terrified, my love (answered the count)—we can’t be far from the village.”

The carriage proceeded, without their discovering those cottage-lights which they momentarily expected to behold—the deep thunder rolled over their heads, and swift succeeding lightnings flashed through the gloom. On a sudden the postillion stopped his horses, and confessed

sed he had lost the way—the dilemma was infinitely distressing—since to return, or to proceed, was alike unsatisfactory, and the profound darkness which shrouded the heavens rendered any other path imperceptible. The count was persuaded they were nearly at the verge of the forest, and therefore bade the postilion to go on. Vainly their straining eyes sought some feeble taper to cheer their hopes—another tedious hour elapsed, equally unsuccessful—a tremendous peal of thunder now shook the earth, and a stream of electric fire shivered a deep rooted oak immediately before them—the postillion halted.

“ Proceed (cried Theodore)—the storm passes us.”

At length the thunder sounded more distant—it lightened less frequently, and
in

in another half hour the tempest had totally subsided—here and there a star was observed to twinkle through the interstices of the forest—presently the rising moon darted a welcome beam amidst the embouring branches, and they perceived, that instead of making the skirts of the forest, they were now in the thickest part of it. Olivia strove to conceal her terrors, which the gentlemen too clearly perceiving, were endeavouring to dissipate, when starting, she exclaimed—“ Surely I hear voices ! ”—they listened with profound attention—the sound gained on the ear, and to their inexpressible joy, they distinguished a chorus of vocal and instrumental music, as, proceeding from some monastery not far distant. Theodore encouraged the postillion to follow the sound, which he heedfully did, till it sunk in a solemn

lemn cadence, and died on the listening ear. Again the travellers, plunged in dreadful uncertainty, knew not whither to direct their course—Theodore jumped out of the chaise, with intent to take that view of their present situation, which the full beams of the moon now afforded—he presently returned to the carriage with intelligence, that some large building was plainly discernable.

“ Doubtless the monastery (replied the count)—let us make directly towards it.”

One ten minutes more brought them to the gate, which was readily opened by a monk, with whom it was sufficient to know that they were distressed travellers, in order to produce from him an invitation to enter the pious asylum. After providing them with the refreshments

ments they stood much in need of, the hospitable religious showed them to separate apartments, or rather cells, where they might recruit their exhausted spirits by seasonable and undisturbed repose.



VOL. II.

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CHAP. XXIII.

PAST fatigue and anxiety procured the ready visits of sleep; Olivia in particular slept as soundly on the little pallet and coarse matrass, as ever she had done on the softest bed of down. After two or three hours of uninterrupted repose, she awoke at the sound of the matin bell, on which she arose and went towards the window, from whence was an extensive view of the forest she had recently passed.

sed. Contrasting the horrors then experienced with the security and peace of the present moment, a pleasurable emotion of mingled gratitude and joy was excited in her mind:—as she stood contemplating the progress of light on the spacious landscape, the choral hymns of the monks burst from the chapel, and her soul, already on the wings of devotion, mounted upwards with the awfully swelling notes, kindling as it soared into that flame of holy ardour, which proud bigots or phlegmatic formalists can never be capable of. The gentle rap of Theodore recalled her from these meditations, and she accompanied him to the parlour, where the count was acknowledging to the superior the proper sense he entertained of the seasonable hospitality afforded him and his companions. Aware that the baron and his

party were enduring the most anxious apprehensions on their account, the count would only take a slight repast, and then entered the carriage, which was now conducted by a guide appointed by the good fathers.

At the distance of about half a league from the monastery, one of the monks was observed to follow the carriage in great haste, on which the count bade the postillion to stop. As soon as the monk got up to the door of the carriage, he presented the identical picture which Olivia had taken from the old castle in Wales, and desired to know if it belonged to either of the company—
“ If it does (pursued he) I would entreat the owner to return with me for a little space—I know not the occasion, but the sight of this picture has so deeply
affected

affected an aged and sick brother of our order, that we fear it will be too much for him—for the sake of christian charity, do not withhold the satisfaction which it may be in your power to afford him.”

While the monk was speaking, the count examined the picture with great attention, and Olivia in some confusion acknowledging that she had inadvertently let it drop from her pocket, he said they would all go back to the convent. At the entrance of it they were met by the superior, who courteously apologized for the trouble which this incident had occasioned them—“ but (added he) the exemplary piety and sufferings of our afflicted brother well merit such condescension at your hands.” As they proceeded along the cloister,

he farther told them, that brother Crispin had grown aged in their society, and had long been supposed on the verge of dissolution; yet no consideration could prevail with him to relax that course of severe penitence and austere devotion, in which he had persevered for nearly twenty years."

This discourse brought them to Crispin's cell. Olivia, on entering, gave an involuntary shriek, and sunk back on Theodore's arm, who was not very differently affected from herself—for the figure which here appeared before them was exactly the same they had formerly, with memorable terror, beheld in the Welch castle. Her agitation was rendered more excessive, when a hollow voice demanded to which of them the picture belonged. Theodore replied, that

that strictly speaking, it was the property of neither of them, it having been accidentally discovered in some old ruins in Wales."

"Do you know nothing of the original of that picture?" cried the monk, with terrifying energy.

"We know nothing of it, father—but that we have been told, it represents the last proprietor of that castle."

The monk groaned horribly—"Do not trifle with my misery—be sincere, and tell me all you know."

Both Theodore and Olivia averred themselves utterly ignorant of all which concerned that young lord, except as report had informed them that he perished at sea.

The

The monk threw himself prostrate on the floor—dreadful convulsions shook his emaciated body—the superior bade him be of comfort, but he exclaimed in an agonized tone—“All hope is fled me—misery follows me to the tomb.”

The count, who had remained a silent spectator of this extraordinary scene, now advanced and said—“The uncommon interest which father Crispin discovers in this little portrait, renders it an act of charity to assist his enquiries.—I think, my good father, that I once knew a person so exactly like that picture, that he well may have passed for the original.”

“You knew him (reiterated the monk, starting up)—when—where—what is become of him?” As he spake, a furious joy gleamed in his sunken eyes, resembling

bling rather the wild emotion of insanity, than rational satisfaction—"Speak—speak," added he.

"He is dead," replied the count.

"Speak—speak, I tell you (raved the poor monk)—he is not dead—he shall live—show me to his grave, if you speak truly—his grave, I say his grave, his grave." Here his voice sunk in mournful cadence, and died in groans.—The count entreated he would be calm, and he would repeat all he knew respecting that person. "Somewhere about forty years ago (said he) a boy of about two or three years old was found in the gardens of my father's chateau, on the coast of Britany——

"Britany (reiterated the monk with a look of horror)—did you say Britany?"

"I did

“ I did—the only account which the infant could give of himself was, that some men had conveyed him thither in a ship, or as he called it, a great wooden house. Humanity induced the countess, my mother, to admit him into the family, where he was bred up, and engaged the affections of us all : as he grew to manhood, he became the companion of myself and sisters, and with us received every advantage of education. Unfortunately, my youngest sister conceived for him a tender passion, which he returned with equal ardour : this mutual affection advanced with their years, and in the end proved the ruin of both ; for though Francisco had every endowment both of person and mind, to conciliate love and esteem, yet as his birth was obscure, my mother was inexorable in her resentments, when she understood that

that a clandestine marriage had actually taken place between them. In fine, they sailed together to America, where fortune began to smile on them: for some years they lived happy in each other, blest with competence, and beloved by all who knew them. So lively was the affection which I myself bore to him, that had he been living at the time of my mother's death, I should have welcomed him back to France, and presented him with that portion of the family property, which my mother's resentment could never allow him."

"Nor needed you (cried the monk) have blushed to own that affection—the person whom your sister married, was the true lineal heir of the ancient house of Ranspach.—Oh! all you host of guardian angels—you who protect innocence

cence—where were ye, when ruthless I tore him from his native soil, and left him a helpless infant on a foreign shore?"

Deep agonizing groans again shook his whole frame—he arose, and with perturbed motion walked to and fro, clasping his hands and groaning—then raising his dim eyes to heaven, he exclaimed—"Can there indeed be pardon for crimes like mine?"—turning to the count, he said—"I am the man who put that infant ashore on the coast of Britany. —Welsted, that most accursed of villains, engaged me, then young, to clear his way to the Ranspach title and estates, by destroying the lawful heir, whom he obliged me to swear that I would bury in the bottom of the sea. I embarked with the devoted babe, intent on executing the horrid business I had engaged in.

in. One evening, as we sailed, I took him upon deck in my arms, watching an opportunity of slipping him overboard in such a manner, as should to the crew have the face of accident; when, as if discerning my murderous design, the smiling cherub threw his tender arms about my neck, and in lisping accents desired me not to hurt him. Not yet completely hardened in iniquity, I felt my resolution shaken—something like pity shot into my soul—I carried him back to the cabin, and gave myself leisure to reflect on the deed I had meditated.—I found my nature revolt from the idea of murder—yet unwilling to forfeit the favour of Welsted and the reward propounded, I resolved to remove the child out of the way of Welsted's ambition, by exposing him on some foreign shore. The coast of Britany lay in sight.

—I took a boat, and under pretence of conducting the little Ranspach to a place of education, I embarked with him, and without pity or remorse, put him ashore in some gardens belonging to a magnificent mansion—but I troubled not myself with enquiring the name of the owner, much less the future fate of the infant thus exposed. Returning to Welsted, I told him that the obstacle to his wishes was completely removed—it was given out that the vessel foundered at sea, and as there was no one to search out the truth, he without opposition took possession of the title, and the large domain belonging to it. During a course of years that I lived in his service, he employed me in other work of the same black nature; nor did I ever feel compunction, till I had beheld this most diabolical man in the agonies of death.

The

The scene which I then witnessed first awakened me to a sense of my own wickedness:—labouring under the horrors of a guilty conscience, I repaired to this monastery, and having confessed myself to the superior, obtained leave to prosecute the penance I imposed on myself, which was that of passing three months of every year in the place which had been once the residence of a family, now extinct by my vileness. In those dreary ruins I caused the desolate vaults to echo my penitent groans—mouldy bread, and water of the foulest ditch, was my only fare—I never allowed myself to sleep, but spent the night in roaming about the woods, and the days in penitence and prayer. And now, my lord, I will enable you to reinstate the issue of your sister's marriage in the estates which are unquestionably their

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right. Welsted never had possession of the title deeds—I found them concealed in a part of the wall, probably by the lady Ranspach, and I suffered them to remain unknown—not indeed with the view with which I now make the discovery, but in order, at some future time, to enrich myself by making them known to Welsted.”

The count having presented Olivia as the only surviving issue of the unfortunate lord Ranspach, father Crispin implored her, as the representative of her father, to pronounce forgiveness, which she cordially did with the sweetness of an angel of mercy; after which the superior embracing him with tears, bade him in this instance to accept with thankfulness the token of his final pardon—
“So acceptable (said he) to heaven has
been

been your penitence, that your acquittal meets you on this side the grave :—anticipate your future bliss, and depart your weary pilgrimage in peace.”

The count having drawn Theodore aside, told him he thought it would be expedient to request the presence of the baron and his lady ; to which he assenting, a messenger was dispatched to the village, and Crispin wishing to be alone, the visitors withdrew to the parlour.

The baron and baroness were speedily at the monastery, and acquainted with all that had passed. The baron heard the surprizing relation without testifying the least emotion, except that of pleasure, and with a smile said to his lady, “ Emilia, my love—think you that the

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happiness which is now restored us, can be diminished by the loss of a title?"

"On the contrary, it will be increased (she replied) by witnessing justice secured to the injured."

The count judged it proper for them to see and speak with brother Crispin on the important occasion, and having first apprized him of their arrival, the party adjourned to the cell. The monk, who under the title of baroness, was very far from expecting to behold Emilia, no sooner saw her enter, than he exclaimed in a transport of joy—"More sweet tokens of mercy still!—Is it you, most injured lady, that I see?—and are you reunited to your husband?"

The

The baroness was so much surprized, that she could only pronounce the name of Benedict.

“ Yes (he resumed)—I am indeed Benedict, whom your heavenly clemency and pious counsel saved from eternal destruction.—The baron too ! Ah ! my lord, I fear you cannot readily forgive the wretch who prepared you so deep a draught of woe.”

“ Shall man (returned that nobleman) dare to resent a deed cancelled in the chancery of heaven ?”

“ Ah ! (resumed the monk)—you are doubtless unacquainted with the confession I have just now made.”

“ I have heard it all, and am prepared to rejoice in justice done to an injured race—I have been taught lightly to esteem

teem those distinctions which mankind are too prone to idolize—nor have I a wish to retain that title and those estates, which, though guiltless, I received with the incumbent curse of fraudulent iniquity.”

The superior of the convent warmly approved those sentiments—he congratulated Benedict on the holy peace which shone on his departing hours—and exhorted the whole company to reflect, whether from the adversity they had severally experienced, there were not some motives of gratitude to be deduced.

“There are,” cried Theodore and Olivia, with one voice and a look of mutual tenderness.

“And I, for my part (rejoined Emilia) am ready to acknowledge, that the humility

mility and pious resignation which my sorrows have taught me, are valuable preparatives to the proper enjoyment of the happiness now afforded me, and which by those means is rendered far more exalted and refined."

"Misfortunes (said the baron) have a happy tendency to meliorate the heart, and prepare it for virtuous impressions. To this I am probably indebted for that indifference to worldly pleasures, which enables the soul to assert her privileges in the scale of rational beings. To misfortune I owe the virtues and valuable accomplishments of my son, who, had he been nursed in the bosom of luxury, had perhaps been as much the affliction, as he now is the joy of my heart."

"Nor could it be expected (added the count) that my Olivia, the acknowledged

ledged heiress of two illustrious houses, would have attained those inestimable qualities of the heart, which, however essential to moral perfection and happiness, rarely make a part of polite education."

The superior attended to those several remarks with pleasure: he smiled complacently on his guests, and requested them henceforth to be satisfied, that moral evil would not have been allowed a place in the constitution of things, were it not that superior good might ultimately be deduced.

Theodore, who had now seen himself suddenly stripped of those honours, which but a little before he had been unexpectedly raised to, could not avoid feeling some uneasy sensations, when he

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reflected, that he could no longer with propriety support his claim to Olivia's regard; who, circumstanced as she now was, ought to enjoy the advantages of some more illustrious alliance. As they both happened to stand a little apart from the company, he congratulated her on what had taken place, but he did it with so dejected an air, that she could not forbear to rally him upon it.—“I declare, Theodore (said she) did I not thoroughly know your heart, I should suspect you too proud to possess the advantages you speak of, through the medium by which they are now to be conveyed to you.”

“Those advantages, madam, belong not to me—you are entitled to a splendid alliance—and what has the poor indigent Theodore now to offer?”

“The

“The same amiable heart which he tendered, and I accepted, when a happy obscurity shaded us both.”

“Is it possible that Olivia should not consider me as the usurper of her rights, and the descendant of one who was an enemy to her race!”

“I consider only the man, who amidst the flowing tide of wealth and distinction, yet remained the faithful lover of an indigent low-born girl, apparently without fortune or connections.”

The count, though seemingly otherwise engaged, had listened to their conversation, and surveying Olivia with a look of satisfaction, took her hand and joined it with that of Theodore.—“I see no occasion, my lord (said he to the baron)

ron) for the circumstance, which has now been revealed, to transpire beyond these walls—we will unite this constant pair before we depart, by which means every thing will remain as it was.—Theodore will not dislike the baronial honours of Ranspach the more, for possessing them in right of his wife—and you, my lord, must consent to hold the title and estates, till by the course of nature they duly revolve to your son—mean time, the fortune which Olivia shall inherit in right of her mother, will amply support the young couple in as much splendour as they ought in reason to wish for.”

In fine, the marriage ceremony was immediately solemnized in the chapel of the monastery, to the heart-felt satisfaction of all present. Brother Crispin

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had

had just enough left of vital animation to be present, and to give Olivia's hand in marriage—which having done, he dropped on his knees, and exclaimed—
“It is enough,” and with a sweet sense of pardoning mercy, yielded his last breath on the bosom of the superior.

The company not deeming it proper to interrupt by their presence the solemn meditations of the holy brotherhood on so awful an occasion, took respectful leave of them and departed, impressed with religious awe and admiration at what they had witnessed in the case of the poor departed penitent.

It only remains to be added, that Theodore and Olivia passed the principal part of their time with the count and
madam

madam de Blore ; the baron and baroness having also chosen the neighbourhood of Bareges for their residence in preference to England, which had been the theatre of their respective sorrows. They caused the castle in the Orkneys to be demolished, and on its scite a monastery was erected, and amply endowed : Alicia, the unfortunate wife of lord Edmund, having chosen the conventual life, became the first abbess.

Lady Edith married the marquis Villeroy—and thus the several branches of this amiable family were enabled to enjoy the pleasure of social and relative intercourse.

The castle in Wales was restored to its original condition of magnificence ;
and

and here Theodore and Olivia passed a part of each year, diffusing to all around the happiness which themselves enjoyed, and honouring, by their mutual virtues, the sacred memory of St. Leger.



